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THE LORD'S PRAYER

THE

LORD'S PRAYER

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Sermons preached in Westminster Abbey

BY THE VERY REV.

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PREFACE

THESE Sermons on the Lord's Prayer were preached in Westminster Abbey, with the exception of two or three delivered in St. Margaret's, Westminster. They are of the plainest and simplest character, written from week to week as duty required. I had no intention of publishing them, and in allowing them to appear in this form I yield to considerable pressure, partly because I have reason to hope that they were found useful by many when they were delivered, and partly because they were taken down in shorthand and have been printed by others without permission and with imperfect accuracy. They make no pretensions to depth, originality, or literary finish, but aim simply and solely at religious edification.

I can no longer trace back to their source many

of the thoughts, and possibly even some of the expressions, which occur in them. I was chiefly indebted to the works on the Lord's Prayer by Bishop Andrewes, Dr. Isaac Barrow, Archbishop Leighton, and Professor F. D. Maurice. It is certain, too, that I must have derived valuable hints from the Sermons and Addresses of my friends the Dean of Llandaff and Dr. Newman Hall.

F. W. FARRAR.

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AFTER THIS MANNER PRAY YE

“After this manner pray ye.”—MATTHEW vi. 9.

THE more the years pass on, the deeper becomes my conviction that religion does not mean, and has little to do with, many things it is taken to mean. It does not mean elaborate theologies; it does not mean membership of this or that organisation; it does not depend on orthodoxy in matters of opinion respecting which Christians differ. It means “a *good heart* and a *good life*.” Right conduct, a holy character—these are the tests of the only sort of religion which is of the smallest value. All else will vanish; this will remain. Of the many lies which God’s fiery finger will “shrivel from the souls of men,” all sorts of religious shams, unrealities, human systems, shibboleths, and accretions to the pure truth of His Gospel will be the most numerous. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—these are the only fruits of the Tree of Life which are genuine; and the glossy

leaves of arrogant Pharisaism are leaves for the poisoning—not for the healing—of the nations.

With this conviction, during the last months of my residence as Canon, I did not choose any recondite subjects on which to speak to you, but chose the old, simple, majestic voice of Sinai, the Ten Words which comprise all the grandeur of the moral law. God's revelations fall under the two heads of the Law and the Gospel. The Law alone—holy as it is, and just and good—carries with it no power to secure our obedience. The voice of its archangelic trumpet, for sinners such as we are, does but shatter the darkness with menaces of doom. But Christ came with His Gospel to deliver us from the curse of the Law; to secure us forgiveness for its past violation; to inspire us with strength for future faithfulness. The forgiveness was procured by Christ's sacrifice; the strength was inspired by His Spirit. The chief means whereby we can avail ourselves of both is prayer.

That we should be allowed to pray, that access to God should thus be given us in Christ, is the most priceless boon granted to our humanity. I shall not waste time over theoretic difficulties which the sceptic may suggest about prayer. The instincts and the needs of humanity tear the difficulties of sceptics to shreds, and fling them to the winds. The voice of God in the heart of man imperiously

bids him to make his requests known unto God. Yes, and let the sceptic himself but once be plunged into the waves and storms of calamity, and he belies his own negations, and pours out prayers which he cannot help to the God in whom he refuses to believe. It is told of Thistlewood, the Cato Street conspirator, that after arguing against the existence of a God, the moment he was left alone he was heard to fling himself on his knees in his prison cell in a passion of entreaty, and that on the scaffold he poured out the agonised supplication, "O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul!"

It would be superfluous to argue with any one of you about the need of prayer, for there is not one of you who has not felt it. Rather let me remind you, Christian men and women, of the duty of prayer, since God bids us pray to Him; and of the dignity of prayer, since therein the Almighty admits us, who are but dust and ashes, through Christ, into His very audience-chamber; and of the necessity for prayer, seeing that without it all our religious life will fade, as surely as the flowers on which no dew falls; and of the consolation of prayer, by which alone we can cast our burden upon the Lord. And let me remind you of the reflex benefits of prayer upon ourselves. Prayer, as St. Augustine says, brightens the heart and purges it for the acceptance of the gifts of heaven. Prayer strengthens the

faith from which it springs ; it gives to hope its *ἀπακαραδοκία*, the stretching out of the neck, the standing a-tiptoe in earnest expectation ; it kindles love to a purer and brighter flame. All Christian graces come to us through prayer.

These benefits of prayer speak for themselves. Nor need I detain you long by telling you what prayer is. I could not tell you anything better than what holy souls have said of it. Prayer, so wrote one of the saints of God in his private diary, is "want felt ; help desired ; faith to obtain that help." "Prayer," says another, "is helplessness casting itself upon power ; it is misery seeking peace ; it is unholiness embracing purity ; it is hatred desiring love. Prayer is corruption panting for immortality ; it is the eagle soaring heavenward ; it is the dove returning home ; it is the prisoner pleading for release ; it is the mariner steering for the haven amid the dangerous storm ; it is the soul, oppressed by the world, escaping to the empyrean, and bathing its ruffled plumes in the ethereal and the divine."

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed ;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air ;
His watchword at the gates of death,
He enters heaven with prayer.

Now, because prayer is a thing so blessed, and so necessary, let me urge on every person here present the message of our Lord, that they ought always to pray and not to faint. A Christian who does not pray is a dead Christian. He is not—he cannot be—a true Christian at all. For he violates the most imperious instinct, and flings away the chiefest blessing of the Christian life. He becomes like a man who is blind and lame, and who yet, though his path lies amid stumbling-blocks and precipices, flings away his crutch and drives away his guide. Oh ! I fear that many, after their childish years, abandon the habit of prayer altogether, to the fatal injury of all peace with God. And that is the reason why we see so many evil, so many disordered, so many absolutely depraved lives ; that is the reason why the world is so full of misery and wickedness, and the Church so full of pettiness and malice. Oh ! if it be true of any of you that you no longer open the day and close the night with prayer, hear from my lips the call of God, that ere you be left fatally to yourselves you should resume it. Begin this very day. Do not retire to rest this night till you have knelt before the God of your life, and asked Him,

for His dear Son's sake, to forgive all your neglect, all your backsliding, all your wickedness. It may be the very saving of your soul. You will find an infinite blessedness in doing so. If you come to your Saviour, He will receive you graciously, He will love you freely.

Is not this the very reason why God makes prayer so incredibly easy to us? "Every time, place, posture," it has been truly said, is easy. "Talent is not needful; eloquence is out of place; dignity is no recommendation. Our want is our eloquence, our misery our recommendation. Thought is quick as lightning, and quick as lightning can it multiply effectual prayer. Prayer needs no ceremonies; rubrics are childishness to it. The whole function is simply this: a child, a wandering child, comes to its Father, and pleads for grace and pity, for forgiveness and for help."

But now, just because God has made prayer so easy, because it is of such vital importance, Satan—God's enemy and ours—does his utmost to ruin for us this gift of God. And this he does in two ways. He diverts us from prayer; he tries to pervert our prayer itself into sin.

First, he diverts us from prayer. He knows that, if he can succeed in that, we are his slaves. He makes us too proud to pray; he suggests doubts of

the usefulness of prayer ; he crowds prayer out of our lives with earth's follies and emptiness ; he whispers to us that we are too wicked to pray ; he tells us that there will be time enough to pray when passion is dead and youth is over. Ah, my friends, be not ignorant of his devices ! This is Satan's way of lulling you to fatal security, of robbing you of your armour, of keeping you defenceless amid fierce temptations and sundry kinds of death. He knows well that either praying will make you leave off sinning, in which case you are delivered out of his snares ; or that sinning will make you leave off praying, in which case, unless God in His mercy pluck you as a brand out of the burning, you will be saved only as by fire.

Now Christ does not contemplate the possibility of a Christian who has ceased to pray ; such a Christian is in God's sight no Christian ; but He warns us of the other danger, that Satan, if he cannot *divert* our prayers, will do his utmost to *pervert* them. And on this head He gave two warnings : one against idle verbiage ; the other against hypocritic formality. "In praying," He said, "use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do." The Hindoo fakir will spend all day in repeating over and over again the name of his deity. The Buddhist bonze thinks that there is salvation in the endless repetition of his magic formula. The

Mussulman will interlard his commonest, and even his wickedest speech, with endless parentheses of "God is great," "God is compassionate." The ignorant Romanist repeats his *Aves* and his *Paters*, dropping a bead with every *Paternoster*. God bears compassionately with our fooleries, but in itself this, and all that our Lord calls *βαπτολογία* and *πολυλογία*—is mere stuttering, and the tumbling out of empty words. And at last prayer becomes degraded into a fetishistic mechanism, and the Tartar thinks that he offers so many thousand prayers with every clatter of his prayer-mill.

Long prayers, even repeated prayers, may have their place. St. Augustine tells us that he spent all the night in the single prayer, *Noverim te, Domine; noverim me* ("O Lord, may I know Thee! may I know myself!") Such a prayer does not break our Lord's command, so long as the prayer continues to be intense and fervent. Our Lord sometimes spent whole nights in prayer; and in Gethsemane He prayed thrice over, using the same words. But the moment a prayer becomes a mechanical weariness, the moment the lips repeat it but the heart cannot follow, it ceases to be a prayer, and becomes a mockery. "What God requires and looks at," says Bishop Hall, "is neither the arithmetic of our prayers,—how many they are; nor the rhetoric of our prayers,—how eloquent they

be; nor the geometry of our prayers,—how long they be; nor the music of our prayers,—how sweet our voice may be; nor the logic, nor the method, nor even the orthodoxy of our prayers”; but the one thing which avails is ferventness and sincerity. Long Sunday services, endless daily services, may be, and often become, an idle waste of time, or mere superstitious and mechanical functions. The most effectual prayers which Scripture records were the very briefest: “God be merciful to me the sinner!”; “Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?” “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

Do not let us deceive ourselves as to the value of outward forms. They may be mere bodily exercise; they may represent neither true Christian work nor any fraction of furtherance of the kingdom of heaven. They may only deaden us into spiritual torpor and inflate us with Pharisaic pride. Few, very few—none but God’s truest saints—can make long prayers; and when our Lord gave His model prayer, saying, “Thus pray ye,” knowing our wants, knowing our nature, knowing our sole capabilities, His model was brevity itself. Prayer is no bare huddle of ceremonies, or heaping up of formal words in empty churches. Be they hurriedly babbled, or be they unctuously droned, or be they pompously rolled forth, they may be no more than the idle speaking and much speaking against which Christ

warns us. Far better that our prayers should only occupy five minutes and be sincere, rising like incense through the golden censer of our one and only Priest, Christ Jesus, than that they should be a spiritless mummerly, or that they should resemble the idle vaunt of the Pharisee,—a prayer kindled with the strange fire of pride, which stank to heaven.

“Thus pray ye,” said Christ, and therefore any other manner must be a wrong manner. Now, in subsequent sermons I propose God helping me, to study with you the Lord’s Prayer, clause by clause; convinced, as I said, that in these divine and simple formulæ—in the Lord’s Prayer, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the Ten Commandments, in the Apostles’ Creed—we shall find, over and over again, more truth, more orthodoxy, more divinity, more spiritual elevation and comfort, than in all the voluminous instruction which teaches for doctrines the commandments of men.

Why need we worry ourselves and the poor simple souls of God’s children with the intolerable and interminable prolixities of party opinionativeness and controversial dogmatism? What avails it to magnify the non-essential, altering the whole perspective of the New Testament, substituting mediæval corruptions for Gospel truths, and confusing men’s consciences by the invention of artificial sins, when we see all around us that these developments may be as

alien as possible from even the most elementary of Christian graces? If we are deceived by pretension and nullities it is our own fault. After all the mischief that priests and systems have done, nothing is simpler than true religion. It is the way of holiness, in which not even the fool need err. It is to serve God with all our heart. So Christ taught. He said that the golden rule of love comprised all the Law and the Prophets. What does the Lord require of any one of us? To do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God: that and nothing more. So teaches the Old Testament. How are we to enter into life? Christ's answer to the question was: Keep the Commandments. Go to Him, confess to Him, ask of Him, and you need never be misled by the vain teaching of erring men. And as you have heard two of His warnings about this infinitely important duty of prayer, so hear these other warnings of which His Word is full.

First, remember God will hear no wicked prayer. Men have been known to ask God for what they would not dare to ask men. The Hindoo Thug prays to his goddess that his murders may be accomplished. The Italian bandit thanks the Virgin for the success of his raid. In the heathen satirist, the hypocrite prays to Laverna that he may deceive successfully, and that men may think him holy and just. Against such prayers I need hardly warn you. They are as if a man offered swine's flesh upon the altar.

But we all need much more an earnest warning against selfish and earthly prayers. Of all the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, one only is for the simplest of earthly needs, and even in that the heavenly is mingled with the earthly. We may mention to God our earthly desires, but never without the two humble provisos : Only if it be good for me ; only if it be Thy will. For, as the heathen poet says, "The gods have overthrown whole houses at their own desire" ; and as our own Shakspeare sings :

We, ignorant of ourselves,
 Beg often our own harms, which the wise powers
 Deny us for our good ; so find we profit
 By losing of our prayers.

Nothing is a more paltry abuse of prayer than the mean and selfish pestering of God with "undue and unworthy suits." "O Allah," prayed the Mussulman, "I want a hundred sequins. Just a hundred sequins, neither more nor less. O Allah, give me a hundred sequins !" If that be all a man has to ask of God, he might just as well not ask at all. Far better is it, as even pagans have taught, to feel that man is dearer to God than to himself, and to ask Him only to supply our deepest needs. The poet was versifying a sentence of Plato when he wrote :

Not what we wish, but what we *want*,
 Thy bounteous grace supply :
 The good, unasked, in mercy grant ;
 The *ill*, though asked, deny.

Lastly, as we should hate wicked prayers and shun foolish and futile prayers, let us never forget that our prayers are as *we* are. The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. By the prayer of the wicked is not meant for a moment the prayer of sinners who come as sinners, desiring to sin no more; but the prayer of the wicked, in the midst of wickedness, who do not mean to abandon that wickedness. The prayer of men who vainly try to deceive God as well as themselves—of men who go on still in their wickedness, of men who want to serve God and Mammon, to worship Christ and yet keep all their own vilest idols—that is an abomination to the Lord. If we come to God with a sin upon our conscience, and do not mean to abandon that sin; if the cheating tradesman calls his family to prayers but does not mean to give up his adulterations and frauds, his false balances and deceitful weights; if a man kneels to God with his heart full of raging malice and hatred, and has not the slightest intention to be just to his opponents, his very prayer is but a sin, which adds deeper blackness to his other sins. If a man has merely touched an unclean insect and thrown it away, say the Rabbis, the smallest drop of water is sufficient to purify him; but if he holds the creeping thing in his hand, defilement will continue to cleave to him though he use for lustration all the waters of the sea. Even so is the man who prays that his sin may

be pardoned and yet does not mean to renounce it. St. Augustine tells us, in his "Confessions," how, when a youth, he was miserably entangled in the lusts of the flesh, and prayed to God to deliver him, secretly hoping that God would *not* hear him just yet, in order that he might sin a little longer. Ah! such a prayer as that is worse than valueless; it is blasphemous: and as for its being heard, a man might as well pray (as the Russian writer says they mostly do pray) that two and two may not make four.

No uninspired writer has illustrated this awful truth with more force than our own Shakspeare in his "Hamlet." There the murderous, adulterous king kneels down to pray. Not even he, observe, would be in the least too bad to pray; not even the prodigal, so he have but left the far country with its husks and swine, will be rejected at the throne of grace. And this the bad king feels. "What," he says:

What if this cursed hand
 Were thicker than itself in brother's blood,
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence?

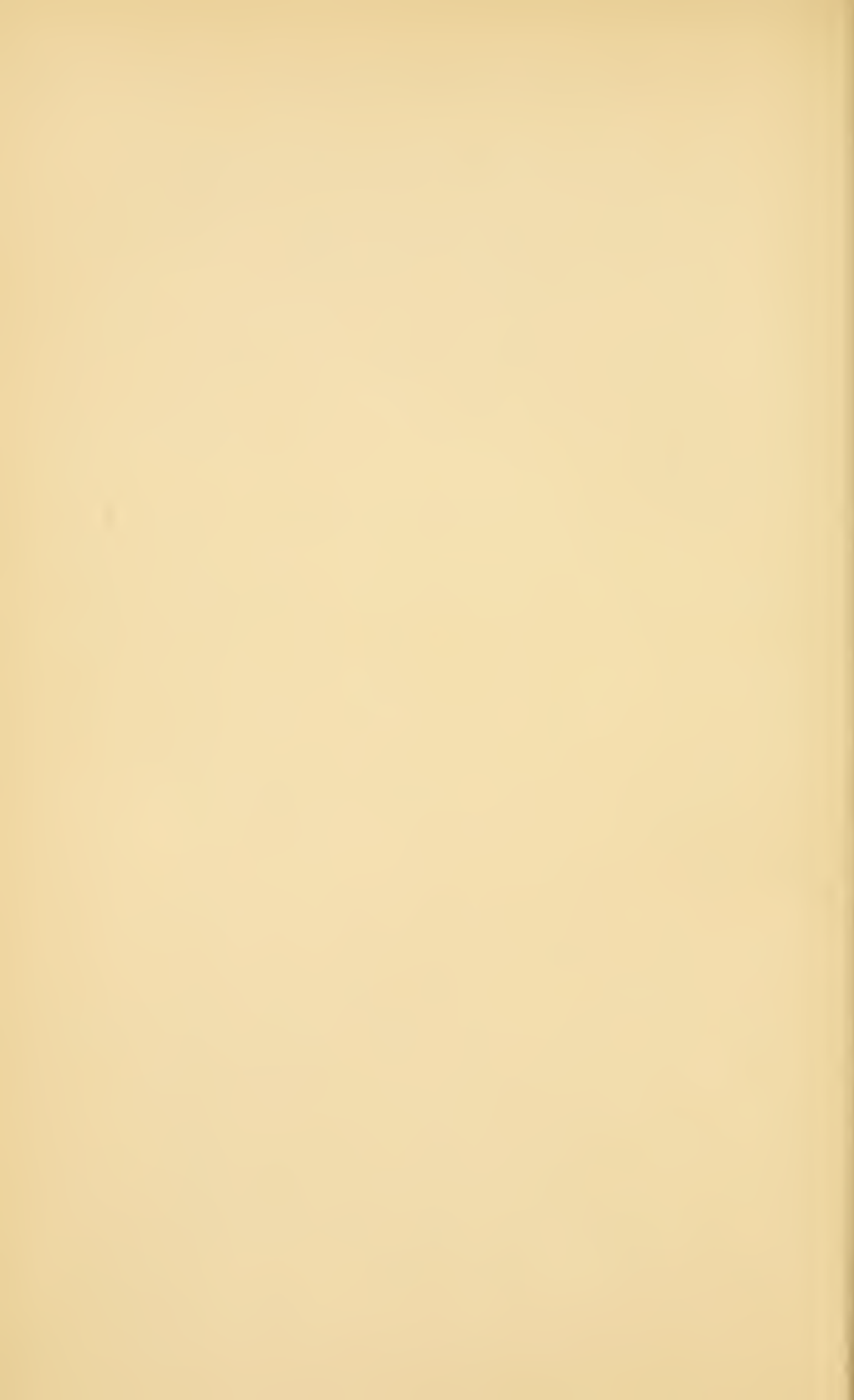
But then he is at once met by the fatal fact that remorse and misery are not repentance, and that he does not repent since he still means to keep his sin.

O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? "Forgive me my foul murder"?
 That cannot be; since I am still possessed
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.
 May one be pardoned and retain the offence?

Ah, no! for ever and for ever no! And so,
 though he still remains upon his knees, he soon
 finds that his prayer is but a hollow mockery, and
 rising, he sighs aloud:

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

Ah, my friends, it is for this reason that prayer
 may be so infinite a boon to you. Satan trembles
 when he sees not only "the weakest saint," but
 even the vilest sinner, "on his knees." He knows
 that the sinner is escaping him, if it can be said of
 him "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer is God's own anti-
dote for sin. It is God's means of our gaining that
 gift of the Holy Spirit which can sanctify us from
 sin. It is God's means of applying to our souls indi-
 vidually that forgiveness of sins which Christ lived
 and died to gain for all our race. Ah! offer not the
 prayer of the wicked, but the prayer of the humble
 publican, the prayer of the penitent prodigal, and
 then be sure that it will be granted. For it is
 Christ Himself who invites us. "Come unto me,"
 He says, "all ye that are weary and heavy laden,
 and I will refresh you;" and "Him that cometh
 unto Me, I will in no wise cast out."



OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN



“Our Father which art in heaven.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 9.

MANY of you, perhaps, think that you know all that can be said about a theme so simple as the Lord's Prayer. My friends, I doubt whether the greatest and most learned of us has mastered so much as a fragment of what we may learn from it. Unlike the puerilities and pettinesses of human dogmatism, these great eternal words of the Son of God are unfathomable as the deep. Its surface may flash with a network of sunbeams in innumerable laughter; but what does the gilded shallop which glides over its summer calm know of the might of its billows or the majesty of its storms? Its wavelets may break in rippling music at our feet; but what does the child who plays beside them guess of its unseen abysses, and of the whole swing of the ocean on which those tiny rippling waves depend?

“The Paternoster,” says Maurice, “is not, as some fancy, the easiest, most natural of all devout utterances. It may be committed to memory

quickly, but it is slowly learned by heart. Men may repeat it over ten times in an hour, but to know what it means, not to contradict it in the very moment of praying it, not to construct our prayers upon the model most unlike it, that is hard." Yes, it is hard, for it requires the spiritual mind. Sensuous forms of worship are cheap and easy, but it takes almost an angel to worship God in spirit and in truth.

Have we ever realised how infinite was the importance of the request, how supreme the boon of its concession, when the Apostles said: "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples"? Here is no earthly teacher speaking, no petty, human theologian, but God Himself teaching us how to pray to God. Deep should be our gratitude that this example of prayer is so plain that a little one can utter it, so profound that not the wisest of us all can fully explore its hidden treasures.

But how awfully anxious should we be to catch at least the keynote which is struck by the Son of God to show us the manner in which we should make our approach to God! That keynote is struck in this address: "Our Father which art in heaven." It teaches us on the very threshold of prayer to compose our hearts before Him, to check the idle roving of our thoughts, to serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

“*Our Father which art in heaven.*” “Which art.” He who cometh to God must believe that He is. Yet how many of us really believe that God is; that our lives are passed in His presence; that He is a besetting God; that His eye sees us always; that He is “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity”; that when we kneel down on our knees before Him we enter the very audience chamber of the King of kings? Oh! is it such a nothing that this awful, eternal, infinite God suffers us to take refuge with Him from the worthlessness of the world and the baseness of our own hearts? When we remember all our sins and shames, when our iniquities take such hold upon us that we are not able to look up; or when, on the other hand, our hearts are full of coldness and insolence, do the words of Joshua never flash upon our memory: “Ye cannot serve God, for He is a holy God, He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression nor your sins”? Do we never contrast them with the forgiving love which taught us to say, “Our Father”?

And “Which art in heaven:” more accurately, “in the heavens.” “In heaven,” not as limited thereto by local space, but as manifested therein among the holy spirits whom He loves. The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him. Heaven is everywhere where He is. *Sursum corda*—Lift up your hearts!

“What is this we find in ourselves,” asks Leighton, “that makes us so drunk with self-conceit, not only in our converse one with another, but with God? Surely we know Him not; at least we consider not who He is, where He dwells; who we are, and where we dwell. Surely it would lay us low if, when we come before God, we would consider Him as the most glorious King sitting on His throne, compassed with glorious spirits; and we ourselves coming before Him as base frogs, creeping out of our pond where we dwell amidst the mire of sinful pollutions.” By this great addition God would prevent us from mingling our prayers with the impertinences of frivolity and the senselessness of babbling repetitions. But in this way also He would uplift our nothingness into His sublimity. It compresses into three words the great verse of Isaiah: “Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also” (a marvellous ‘also’!) “that is of a broken and humble spirit”—“the highest heavens are the habitation of His glory, and the humble heart hath the next honour to be the habitation of His grace.”

And thus we see that *reverence* is the keynote of the prayer taught us by the Son of God Himself. How, save with reverence, can we approach the God who chargeth even His angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean? We

are told of the bright Seraphim that each of them had six wings. "With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain did he fly." It is in awful reverence that the bright and blameless faces are veiled with those silver wings and feathers like gold. Petty, conceited, ill-mannered irreverence—irreverence of men and women in their demeanour in the Church of God—is always a mark of a vulgar and a shallow nature. No noble nature yet was ever irreverent. The spirit of reverence to God, and to the place where His honour dwelleth, is the mark of the starry spirits before His sapphire-coloured throne; and they in God's presence veil their faces with their wings. House-flies, too, have wings, such as they are, and the house-fly is the type of impudent conceit which honours nothing but its worthless self, and which buzzes with equal noise and equal self-satisfaction about the crown of a king or the forehead of a martyr burning at the stake. Like that wretched insect is he or she whose chattering and giggling emptiness carries even into God's presence and worship the pertness of the popinjay or the brutal swagger of a churl.

Now, we shall be always wise to learn of the greatest intellects; and Dante, the supreme poet of catholicism—"soul awful, if this world has ever held an awful soul"—seized with accurate intuition this keynote of the Lord's Prayer. He saw in it the

eternal rebuke of that pride which is at once the commonest and most fatal of human sins. In Dante's *Purgatorio*, after he and his guide have climbed the three steps—the white step of sincerity, the dark purple step of contrition, the flaming step of love—to stand before the angel of penitence on the diamond threshold which typifies Christ's merits—after they have passed through the wicket-gate, they come to the lowest of the seven narrow terraces which run round the Mountain of Purgatory. It is the terrace of pride, and is carved with Divine examples of humility. Here they see a great multitude advancing towards them, bent down to earth under the weight of heavy rocks, and reminding Dante as they crawl along of the corbels in Gothic buildings bent double under the weight of superincumbent columns, their knees touching their breasts, and seeming to say, with tears, "More I cannot bear." And as he sees them in vision, and thinks of the shallow conceit of men on earth, Dante exclaims: "O haughty Christians, wretched, heavy laden, weak in mental vision, perceive ye not that we are but worms born to bring forth the angelic butterfly that soars unclothed to judgment? Why are your souls so puffed up with pride? Ye are but as insects, as yet but half complete, whose formation is defective." And then, as these once proud, but now half-crushed, spirits crawl towards him in their penitence, he hears that

they are chanting a paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer as part of their discipline. They had learnt and said it in their childhood; and now they have to become once more as little children, and repeat it in the fulness of its meaning, making of every single clause an act of submission and humility. The besetting sin of Dante himself was pride, and in the Lord's Prayer he had found, as we may find, the antidote against it.

But if the words "Which art in heaven" are meant to strike the keynote of reverence, the words "Our Father" give us the dominant notes of trustfulness and love. It was said of the Emperor Augustus that they who dared to speak to him rashly, failed to appreciate his greatness, but that they who, out of fear, dared not speak to him at all, knew not how good he was. So it is with God. He wishes us to be reverent, but not abject. We are but dust and ashes; yet He suffers—nay, urges us—to come to Him. As unworthy sons—as prodigals—yes! but still as sons. He invites us to call Him Father. By this title our humbleness is uplifted into sublimity. "Brethren, behold what manner of love the Father has manifested to us, that we should be called children of God: Yet such we are," for He has Himself sanctioned this "immense pretension." This Fatherhood of God was the most central, the most essential part of the revelation which Christ came to give.

The sense of "Father" here is far deeper than that in which the word was used by the heathen of God as our Creator; far deeper than that in which the Jews used it of Jehovah as the Covenant God of their race. Those privileges of natural and Covenant relation have been made fruitless by our sins. The word "Father" here is a witness and appeal to the Incarnation. It means the Fatherhood which we may claim as brethren of God's only-begotten Son. It means the Fatherhood, not only by generation, but by regeneration; not of birth, but of the new birth. The deeper is our holiness the more inexhaustibly divine the word "Father" becomes to us. If we could utter it aright earth would become a heaven. "As many as received Him to them gave He the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on His name."

When Christ said, "I go to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God," the words were not exactly as we render them. It was *πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν*: "To the Father of Me, and Father of you." "First of Me," says Bishop Pearson, "then of you. Not, therefore, His because ours, but therefore ours because His."

And it is remarkable that, though Christ taught *us* to say "*our* Father," He never used that form Himself, but spoke of God as "*the* Father," as "*My* Father," and "*your* Father"; but never of

“*our* Father,” because, among all the sons of God, there is none like to that one Son of God.

Nor is the address “Our Father” a witness to the Incarnation only, but also to Pentecost. “As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.” If you are led by the Spirit of God, neither sect, nor Church, nor party, nor system, nor any unauthorised intrusions and usurpations of men as feeble as yourselves, can bar your happy access to His immediate presence. You need none to introduce you but Christ, none to intercede for you but Christ, none to absolve you but Christ:

Yes, one unquestioned text we read,
 All doubt beyond, all fear above;
 Nor crackling pile, nor cursing creed,
 Can burn or blot it: God is love.

Only, remember that vast privileges involve immense duties. “If I be a Father,” says God to you, “where is Mine honour?” If you be living to the flesh, if you be living the life of polluted and selfish animalism, if you are one of those depraved, dissolute, selfish, conceited, untrustworthy, malignant creatures, of whom, alas! the world is so full, and have no will to abandon that vile life, *how* can you call God Father? It is not as animals, not as beasts, that we are His children, but only as redeemed and spiritual beings. Oh, every time that we claim as our Father Him who is eternal in the

heavens, remember that the title should overwhelm us with shame and confusion unless we utter it in memory of His own warning: "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

There remains one word more—no less rich in meaning than are the rest—it is the word "Our." It is a protest against that selfishness which is so ingrained in our nature that it tends to intrude even into our holiest things. We are not to pray "*My* Father," for God is only the Father of each as He is the Father of all. Were it not so, we should be often tempted to carry our arrogant exclusiveness and our selfish monopolies even into our prayers. Nay, but they must be extended not only as wide as the communion of saints, but as the human race. This prayer is vast as charity itself. God will not have us in our collective conceit—our conceit of Churchmanship or of opinion—any more than in our individual conceit, try vainly to make for ourselves enclosures in His universal heaven. He will not suffer us, because we belong to this fold, or hold these opinions, to assert any preferential claims to His many mansions. Is it hard for you when you pray "Our Father" to include in that prayer all who hate you without a cause; all who slander and undermine you; all who are champions of causes which you believe to be steeped in falsity; all who in their arrogance treat you as though

you were dust beneath their feet ; all whose vanity and opinionativeness come into rude collision with your own ; all the wrong-doers who make the life of men more wicked and more miserable ? Yes, in the very highest exercise of your lives you *must* associate yourselves with them. You cannot speak for yourself without also speaking for them. You dare not carry your own sins, which so deeply need forgiveness, before God's throne of grace, without also carrying theirs. The word "Our" is indissolubly joined with the word "Father." The prayer is, in one word, a *Paternoster*, and the name "Father" loses its significance for us individually when we will not use it as the members of a family.

See, then, how deep is the meaning in this prayer. Its first word, "Our," is a plea for the universal brotherhood of our race, and for our universal charity towards even those brethren of whom we are tempted to think most unkindly and most contemptuously. The word "Father" is the appeal of love, reminding us, not only of our creation, but also of our re-creation, of our brotherhood with the incarnate Christ, of His Spirit shed abroad in our hearts, whereby we cry "Abba, Father." The words "Which art in heaven," temper with humility and solemn reverence our new friendship and filial relation with God.

Who is sufficient for these things ? How can we

utter even this brief preface to the prayer aright? My friends, every one of us can in his measure utter it aright whose heart is loving and humble. Not the bragging Pharisee; not the domineering Churchman; not the hard hater and despiser of his brother sinners in the great family of God; but the little child, the ignorant, weeping prodigal, the simple, repentant publican, the forsaken beggar in the streets; and yet not even the soul of a Dante or a Milton—nay, not even the burning Cherubim and Seraphim of heaven can utter it in all its fulness.

Is it, then, too high, too deep for creatures such as we are? Would you have it otherwise? Would you have a prayer which you can fathom? Nay; such a prayer could never have come from the lips of the Son of God. Its absolute simplicity, its fathomless meaning, its all-embracing charity, are the stamp of its divine origin. This is why it has "shallows which the lamb may ford, and depths which the elephant must swim." To pride and Pharisaism, to selfishness and hatred, it will remain for ever a dead and empty formula. But it will tremble into angelic music to the ear of humility, and glow and breathe with all its celestial ardour to the heart of gentleness and love.

HALLOWED BE THY NAME

“Hallowed be Thy name.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 9.

MANY, I think, if they spoke with perfect frankness, would say that, of all the seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer, this was the one which is least real to them. Is it so with any of you who hear me? If it is so, should not this be a strong reason for examining more deeply what the petition means? For observe that our Lord not only made room for it in this brief prayer, but placed it in the very forefront; and did so though He has just been uttering the strongest possible warning against all vain and artificial petitions. Milton sings of the evening star:

Hesperus, that led
The starry train, rode brightest.

The first star is the most lustrous of all the night. May not this first prayer “Hallowed be Thy name” be the brightest of all; the most radiant Pleiad of the seven petitions?

I think that it is ; and oh that God would give us this evening star !

For observe, "Hallowed be Thy name" is almost the last thing which we should think of putting into our prayers. Least of all should we be inclined to put this prayer before all the rest, because we are essentially and intensely selfish, and this prayer is absolutely and supremely unselfish. We saw that Christ insisted upon unselfishness when He taught us to say "Our Father"; in this petition, with yet diviner force, He teaches, not unselfishness only, but self-forgetfulness. If in the Preface "Our Father which art in heaven" He strikes the keynotes of reverence and trustfulness, in the first clause He points to the absorption of the thought of self in the thought of God as the only true orientation of our prayers. It is as though He said to us : You are not to live for yourself ; your chief end is to glorify God here, and enjoy Him for ever in heaven hereafter.

How needful is the lesson ! The form which our prayers tend to take is that poor bargaining of the imperfect patriarch : "If Thou wilt give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, then shall the Lord be my God." But ultimately this is as much an earthly prayer as the "O Allah, give me a hundred sequins ; just a hundred sequins," of the poor Mahometan. The only petition in the Lord's Prayer with which the carnal mind has much affinity is "Give *me* my

daily bread ;” and even that it despises as scanty and insufficient. It is ever pestering God with selfish and unseemly desires, which are of the earth earthy. We are like worthless vagrants, bursting with our coarse mendicancy into the presence of a king. Christ discourages this kind of beggary because it soon becomes the degradation of all prayer. It is not of course that we have no need of daily bread : our Heavenly Father knows that we have : Christ Himself encourages us to ask for it in due place and measure ; but He says : “ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” He utterly discourages the putting of our miserable selves and our own mean desires into the forefront. He would teach us that our shivering egotism and small individuality is not to be the pivot of the universe. The day was when men held the geocentric theory of the solar system, and thought that the heaven with all its starry multitudes revolved round our atom-earth. Christ teaches us that the moral order, like the physical, is not geocentric, but heliocentric ; that it rolls round Himself as the Risen Sun of righteousness.

If we do not follow this method and principle of Christ, our prayers will first degenerate into mere clamour for drossy gains and inch-high advancements, and next we shall become full of hatred of the God

who, for our own sakes, may refuse us these paltry and dubious boons ;—just as the Breton peasant flogs the image of his saint who has not granted him a good crop ; or just as our poor passionate King, Henry II., with infinite blasphemy, when he had lost the town of Le Mans, hurled at God his frenzied curse : “ Since Thou hast taken from me the town I loved best, where I was born and where my father lies buried, I will have my revenge on Thee too ; I will rob Thee of that thing Thou lovest most in me.” Ah ! if we would only remember the principle that *to become* and not *to get* should be more the motive of our prayers, that the true tone of prayer is the “ Hallowed be Thy name ” of the adoring child, not the “ Give, give ” of the daughters of the horse-leech—neither our prayers nor our lives would be so poor.

But even if we do not besiege high heaven with mere selfish mendicancy, many would at least think that no petition could, without conventionality, take precedence of “ Forgive us our trespasses.” It is a right, a most necessary petition ; yet even that petition may only be selfishness under another form : the selfishness of remorse and terror ; selfishness still—even if it be expanded to infinitude. And this too has its own deplorable results. Nearly all the corruptions of religion—nearly all that has made religion ruthless and revolting ; all the dehumanised squalor of self-

torture, whether of the Indian yogi or the Christian eremite; all the thrice-accursed infamies of the Confessional and the Inquisition; all the horrors of religious madness and blind fanaticism; all the aberrations of an apostate theology have come from this exclusive thrusting into prominence of the religion of selfish fear. It should be cast out by the spirit of love, because fear hath torment. There are things which loom larger in the noble mind even than individual salvation; like Paul's "I could wish myself accursed from God for my brethren's sake;" or even Danton's *Que mon nom soit flétri, pourvu que la France soit libre*. God would have us come to Him first as a Father: He would have us love Him. All else follows that.

We read how the French boy at Ratisbon rode up exultingly to Napoleon's side, and told him that the victory was won. The chief's eye brightened: "But you are wounded, my boy," he said. "Killed, sire!" said the youth, and dropped down dead. The nobleness of the story lies in the boy's self-forgetfulness. We read how the swift runner Pheidippides, who bore to Athens the news of Marathon, sank dead on the first threshold with the words on his lips, *χαίρετε καὶ χαίρομεν*—"Rejoice ye! we too rejoice." In these fine instances individuality was lost in patriotism. Patriotism is noble, because it rises above the narrow little selfishnesses of the individual.

Which of us, at this moment, does not feel something of that spirit, as in these anxious days we pray :

Oh God, stretch forth Thy mighty hand,
And guide and save our fatherland !

But there can be no true love of our country apart from a love of the supreme goodness. Christ would have us merge all earthly desires in adoration, and be lost in the infinite ocean of God's love.

That fiery patriotism of the French camp is intrinsically nobler than the revolting religionism of the Spanish cloister. Oh, that we felt all this more ; that we were sufficiently noble to feel it more ! The early Christians felt it when even on their dim graves in the Catacombs they sketched the deer, as though they would say : " As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul is athirst for God ; yea, even for the living God ! When shall I come and appear before God ? "

How much, then, should we thank God that this high petition is so divinely, so splendidly unlike even what, in our selfish ignorance, we might have taken for our better prayers ! It teaches us that we are nothing, that God is all in all ; it teaches us to lie still in the light of God's countenance ; to be content sometimes merely to bask in the sunshine of His love.

It is told of one of the best saints of the Middle Ages, St. Thomas of Aquino, that when Christ appeared to him in a vision and said, *Bene scripsisti de me, Thoma; quam mercedem accipies?* the rapt saint answered, *Non aliam nisi Te, Domine*—No other gift than Thyself, O Lord. Ah! how does the world become nothing to them to whom God is all!

St. Theresa once dreamed she saw an angel who had in one hand a curtain and in the other a shell of water, and he said that he meant to hide heaven and quench hell, that men might learn to love God for Himself alone. Certainly our prayers are worth nothing unless the one which takes the precedence of them all is: "Teach me to do the thing that pleaseth Thee, for Thou art my God. Let Thy loving Spirit lead me into the land of righteousness." And that prayer is but another form of "Hallowed be Thy name;" it is an emptying of self that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Yea, it is Christ's beatitude: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled."

So far then, brethren, as to the nature of the petition and the rich lessons which its place in the prayer may teach us. But now we must try to see more nearly what the petition actually *means*.

i. "*Hallowed be Thy name.*" His name is Himself, as He is made known to us. The name of God differentiates Him from all other beings, as men are

by their names one from another ; and nothing is more essential than that we should understand this name, for it were almost better not to think of God at all than to think of Him wrongly and ignobly. Every cruel superstition which has debased mankind has had its origin in unworthy thoughts of God, and primarily in making man—man as he now is—the measure and model of God, instead of understanding that it is only spiritual man, man as he should be, who is made in His image, after His likeness.

No chapter in the history of mankind is more deplorable than that which shows how utterly they have failed to feel after Him and find Him. There is hardly an age, hardly a nation, in which men have not dishallowed God's name up setting up for themselves the grossest travesties of God. Deifying their own hearts' lusts, they have imagined gods polluted and lascivious as themselves, whose worship was infamy. Deifying their own hatred and fear, they have made God a monster of ruthlessness and blood. Deifying their own unbelief, they have spoken of God as did the sceptics of the Old Testament, "Tush! thou God carest not for it;" or imagined Him like the gods of Epicurus, who "sate beside their nectar, careless of mankind." Deifying their own formalism, priests and Pharisees have imagined a God as petty as themselves, troubling Himself with the threads and tassels and the colours of phylac-

teries, till, in their devotion to these imbecilities, they could neglect righteousness and justice, and crucify the Son whom He sent.

They have been polytheists, worshipping many gods; or atheists, denying any god; or ditheists, believing in a good and an evil god; or pantheists, believing that everything is God. And every one of these deadly errors has had its analogue during long centuries of erring Christianity. There was little to choose between the Moloch of the Valley of Hinnom and the Moloch of black-robed monks and sacerdotal Inquisitors at the loathly *auto-da-fé* of Seville, or the accursed stakes of Smithfield and Oxford. Insane religions have set God forth as an insatiable avenger, and even Art has degraded the meek and loving Saviour of the world into a tumultuous and wrathful Hercules, hurling millions into endless flames. More than one sweet saint of God has been driven to say to his raging opponents, "Your god is my devil."

There is little, again, to choose between the careless gods of Epicurus and the easy indifferentist who has dwindled into a mere phantom of good nature, until the sensuous and unbelieving Frenchman begins to talk of "le bon Dieu" in an accent of indulgent patronage. Such insolences, such aberrations, show us how true it is of almost all men—"Thou thoughtest wickedly that I was even such an one as thyself."

How infinitely necessary, then, is this prayer in the forefront of all prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name"! Upon the thoughts we think of God it depends whether our religion uplifts our life, or our life degrades our religion, and smites with the leprosy of selfishness or of superstition even our most holy things.

ii. But how is God's name to be made holy? It is hallowed by all His works, except by devils and by man. It is hallowed by all inanimate things—"Fire and hail, snow and vapour, wind and storm fulfilling God's word." It is hallowed by all the creatures of His hand in their multitudinous Benedicite. It is hallowed by Angels and Cherubim and Seraphim, and all the primal children of His love. It is hallowed by His redeemed saints,

With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly.

But is it hallowed by ourselves? "As He that called you is holy," says St. Peter, "so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." We should hallow His name by utter humility in His presence, for "to Him belongeth righteousness, to us confusion of face." We should hallow it by noble thoughts of Him, and by giving thanks for the remembrance of His holiness. We should hallow it most of all by living lives kind and pure, honest and truthful, obedient

and contented. And then hallowing it ourselves, we should strive that it be hallowed by others also. Alas! who can look on the world, even on the nominally Christian world around him, even on the Church itself as represented by its so-called organs of opinion, and say that it is hallowed? God bids us worship Him exclusively, and our hearts are full of idols. He bids us honour Him by being meek and lowly and unselfish, and men are lovers of their own selves, covetous, boastful, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, implacable, haters of good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Alas, alas! how then shall His name be hallowed by our petty formalities, by our unclean lips, by our slanderous tongues, by our unworthy lives? Ah! it is because we fail so utterly that we pray to God to do what neither His world nor His Church, save most inadequately, has done.

“Father, glorify Thy name,” prayed the Lord Jesus; and the answer came, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” Yea, in spite of His world and of His Church He has glorified His name. He hallowed it of old by His covenant and His promise; by the lives of His patriarchs; by the burning passion of His prophets; by here and there a holy king; by now and then a holy priest. He has hallowed it above all by the sinlessness of the

Son of His love, "the firstborn of many brethren, the Prince of all the kings of the earth." He has hallowed it by the outpouring of His Spirit with rushing wind and parted flames, or descending as the soft dew on holy hearts. He has hallowed it in many a happy baptism; in many a blessed communion; by making His men and women pure and loving, and sending them like white-winged angels into the dark places of the world. He will hallow it in our Church, in our land, in our hearts, if with all our hearts we truly seek Him.

It is in vain to tell the world, which knows Him not, that His name must be hallowed, unless we show Him that even by such as we it has been, it can be hallowed, and this is the meaning of the lives of all His saints. They too were "taken out of the same lump of polluted nature with ourselves"; but as the gem is dull and black in the darkness, but glows and burns and palpitates, restless with living splendour, when it drinks the sunbeam, so our poor souls, dull as they are and base with sin, may be transfigured into glory and loveliness, if, emptied of their lusts and selfishness, they lay themselves wholly bare to receive the effluence of God; if, forgetting all their sins and shames, they pour forth to the God of their life the one supreme petition, "Hallowed be Thy name."

THY KINGDOM COME

“Thy kingdom come.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 10.

LET us try to understand to-day some fraction of the significance of this clause. We have heard in the preface—“Our Father which art in heaven”—the keynotes of reverent adoration and loving trustfulness; we have seen that by the first prayer, “Hallowed be Thy name,” Christ would fain exorcise in us the demon of worldly and even of religious selfishness, uplifting us to see a vision of all things in God, inviting us to open all our hearts to His transfiguring and inspiring effluence.

This second petition points to new spheres of life and duty. It is, as we shall see, no vague aspiration, but a daily and awakening trumpet-call to action, a divine finger pointing to what should be the very course and object of all our lives. ✓

We hear in these days a great deal about “the Church,” and many attach to it a narrow meaning, and put it in a false perspective. They exclude from it all but their own special organisation; they make

the door of it bristle with anathemas; they employ it, not as a bond of holy union, but as a war-cry of arrogant separation. But the word "Church" on the lips of Christ and in the formularies of the Church of England means only the blessed company of all faithful people. Our Lord used the word but once of the Church in general. He spoke habitually, not of the Church, but of the Kingdom of God.

That was the dominant word of His Gospel. If you would form any clear conception of what He meant by it, study again the Sermon on the Mount. That was Christ's description of the Kingdom of God, the sphere of God's rule, in contradistinction to that present order of things which does not set forth His glory;—the Kingdom of Heaven in contradistinction to this world so far as it is under the malign influence of that evil spirit to whom St. Paul gives the terrible title of "the god of this world." In that great proclamation Christ sets forth the *character* of the citizens of the kingdom: not arrogant, railing, exclusive, popular, but meek, merciful, peaceful, and persecuted. He sets forth their influence—not to harm but to preserve, not to condemn but to reconcile, not to destroy but to edify. He describes their new life of prayer and self-denial, their treasure, their service, their repose, their charity. And in His many parables He set forth the purely spiritual character of this king-

dom: its joyousness as of a king's feast, its secret growth, its mingled aspect, its divine inwardness, the necessity for its acceptance, not of this or that opinion or this or that form, but of the moral obedience, the gentle docility, the sweet innocency of a little child.

By the Kingdom of God, then, is not meant here His rule in the material universe. That, too, needs restoration, needs the Palingenesia, the restitution of all things. "Everything seems to have a crack in it." "Something is wrong; there needeth a change." God is no indifferent God of Epicurus, looking down as at a comedy on all the trials, all the miseries, all the conflagrations and catastrophes, which desolate and terrify our mortal life. Think of the sad tidings which we hear from time to time. Think of the steamboat on the glassy lake, with its happy passengers, suddenly transformed into a scene of agony, of death. Think of the tropical island, rent, shattered, overwhelmed, by the sulphurous furies of earthquake and eclipse. Think of the volcano bursting its fetters to roll down on smiling fields its molten lava and scalding deluges and stones of fire. Think of the ghastly spectre of famine stalking over the plains of Russia. Think of the pestilence which walketh in darkness, and has reached the shores of Europe. Think of that capital of our oldest colony laid in ruins by the devouring flames. Think of the lovely Swiss village half over-

whelmed half swept away by the rushing of the avalanche and the flood of the dammed-up mountain stream. Think of the troubles in Uganda, the fierce labour battles of Pittsburg, the Anarchists of France. The air of the world is tremulous with anguish; but the cry of millions of broken or aching hearts enters not in vain into the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth.

We are saved by hope. The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, but it awaits its redemption. That blessed day shall come, foretold by the prophet, when "they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." In that day, instead of Christian populations ruinously armed to the teeth one against another, nation shall not rise up against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. In this sense, too, the universe shall be restored, and the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.

And for this pray we,

May Thy kingdom's peace

Come unto us; for we, unless it come,

With all our striving, thither tend in vain.

✓ If we are to further it, it must come first in our own hearts, mortifying and killing all vices in us.

This prayer, then, is all-embracing in its blessed amplitude. "We pray," says Maurice, "that the King of kings and Lord of lords will reign over our spirits and souls and bodies which He has redeemed. We pray for the extinction of all tyranny, whether in men or in multitudes; for the exposure and destruction of corruptions, outward and inward; for truth and righteousness in all departments of government, art, science; for the dignity of professions; for the banishment from trade of every form of fraud and chicanery; for blessings which shall be the purification, not only of every palace, but of every hovel. We pray for these things, knowing that we are praying according to God's will; knowing that He will hear us."

"If He had not heard this prayer, going up from tens of thousands in all ages, the earth would have been a den of robbers. He will so answer it that all which He has made shall become as it was when He beheld it on the seventh day, and lo! it was very good."

We shall be little likely to pray the prayer aright if we do not feel with self-abasement how far we are from its realisation. Look at the world. I know nothing more paralysing than a callous acquiescence in the state of things around us. A divine discontent, a passionate dissatisfaction, leading to ever-increased efforts is far better than this lazy sloth.

When I stand face to face with the condition of things, I will not say in Dahomey, or Ashantee, or among the slave-drivers of Africa, or the heathen millions of Asia, or among those two-thirds of the human race who still dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, but here in Christian England, here in London, here in Westminster, not a stone's throw from the Abbey and the Houses of Parliament; when I see, not merely the crime, the vice, and the degradation, but the mere passive godlessness all around us, I am as far as possible from sharing in the soft murmurs of mutual admiration whether in the Church or in the world. Faith, indeed, prevents me from saying with the poet—

Oh, never sin, and want and woe this earth will leave,

but when I know that the streets are haunted by thousands who in their misery turn womanhood to loathliness, and affix on the shameful selfishness of manhood a yet deeper stain; when I witness the curse to which betting and gambling lead, and not only see it at work among swindlers and blacklegs, but seizing all classes down to the lowest with the fury of an epidemic, and not yet utterly discountenanced by every honest man; when I see, almost every day, in almost every newspaper, some fresh instance of brutal violence breaking out amid the plague spot of squalor, which arises immediately

from the traffic in drink ; when I watch the greed of Mammon-worship, dead to every duty in the attempt to load itself with the thick clay of superfluous wealth ; when I read of the ever-increasing ostentation of luxury among the rich, and the ever-deepening misery of struggle among the poor, I think that, instead of trumpeting all that we do, it would become us more to put sackcloth upon our loins and sit in dust and ashes for all we leave undone.

Nor does it comfort me much to look at the nominal Church. Better for us to consider our unprofitableness than our merits. I see the same injustice, even deeper malice, in her religious journals. I see her animated by party animosities. I see her lapsing on every side into Romanism in all but name. I see but few saints among her professors, though I hear the name of saint bandied among one another by her partisans. In her ideal the King's daughter is all glorious within—*in vestitu aurato, circumdata varietatibus* ; in her reality I see much that needs the awful warning of Him who standeth in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks. I see her losing her hold on the upper classes, who are growing indifferent to her Sabbaths and her ordinances ; I see her producing little effect on the working classes, not ten per cent. of whom attend her services ; I see her

standing with weak hands and feeble knees in the great battle against the master-fiend of drink, or even siding with his champions and palliating his intolerable enormities.

Let others say smooth things and prophesy deceits; let others, if they will, daub tottering walls with untempered mortar. I will not. They who dare to speak the truth must learn never to quail before the hatred which comes from the supporters of vice and the votaries of error. I believe that, if Paul were to come now, he would say very plainly to the Church of England about many things which prevail in her midst, "Shall I praise you for these things? I praise you not." One of the best poets of this generation sang how our Lord came to earth once more, and felt wroth and ill at ease in our pompous services when He looked out into the salt sea of tears and misery outside; and one of the noblest laymen of this age, General Gordon, said that, if Christ came again, we should, if not crucify, at least overwhelm Him with sneers and innuendoes, as we do His servants, and as did our predecessors the priests and Pharisees of old.

Ah! when God's "infinite and fiery finger shrivels the falsehoods from the souls of men," He will have many to shrivel from ours; and when He whose eyes are as a flame of fire looks upon the

utter unworthiness of what so many vaunt as though it were adequate service, it will have to burn much chaff, and to melt much dross, in His Church, and in every one of us who call ourselves its members.

Now this prayer is, as I said, a trumpet-call to awakenment and to action; for if we pray "Thy kingdom come," that is a monstrous hypocrisy if we are, every day of our lives, hindering and thwarting the advance of that kingdom; it is an hypocrisy if we are indifferent to all its laws and all its interests. It is only a reality if, with however many imperfections, however feebly, however unworthily, we are yet endeavouring sincerely, to the clearest of our lights, to the best of our powers, to prepare the throne of that kingdom, to make straight paths for its advancing chariot in our hearts and in the world.

"*Thy kingdom come.*" Is it not as the voice of the archangel and the trump of God to every man whose life is a lie; whose trade is a curse to his fellow-men; whose profession is full of cheating and dishonesty—to every man who, by the base indulgence of his evil passions, drags down human souls to hell; to every man who, by his pen and by his tongue, pours out constantly the wine of dragons and the poison of asps; to every man who is dishonouring and defying the law of God; to every idolater, swearer, Sabbath-breaker, dishonourer

of his parents ; to every "whoremonger and idolater, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" ?

How can they pray, or mean anything when they pray, "Thy kingdom come" ? They despise its ordinances. They defy its laws. They persecute its subjects. They violate its principles. They put stumbling-blocks in the path of its development. They are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. They are thwarting the blessed order which might even now prevail in the world, and which shall prevail at last ; and let this prayer warn them that he that stumbleth against this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it shall grind him to powder.

But myriads more, who are not active foes of Christ's kingdom, yet are in no sense of the word its upholders. How can they pray this prayer who aim no higher than slothful contentment with the life of the animal,—the multitudes who eat, and drink, and sleep, and live in self-indulgent comfort, but have yet never struck one blow, never lifted one finger, never suffered one loss, never dared even to brave one taunt for the cause of God, nor can show one scar of a single wound in even the lightest of His battles ? If we pray "Thy kingdom come," we are bound to fight for it and fight hard ; to strike for it and strike home ; to wrestle mightily, and shoulder

to shoulder, and at all costs, against the corruption of its truth and the adversaries of its holiness!

How many of us dare to do this? Dare to stand alone? Dare to strike out against the stream? Dare to take up our cross and follow Christ, doing the hard deed and speaking the difficult word, while we walk after Him weeping, with aching heart and bleeding feet? How many of us are doing any one self-denying thing to promote Christ's kingdom? Why even if a youth or a girl does but teach in a Sunday-school, or look after the needs of a few poor, even if a man, doing absolutely nothing else, and ashamedly conscious that he does nothing else, at least gives something more than sham dribblets of his superfluity to Christ's suffering little ones; they do, little indeed, but still something. How many of you can honestly say that you are doing even so much as this? How many of us in God's sight are in reality doing anything except living and dying for ourselves? ✓

Well, then, let this prayer arouse us! You who are young, you the scholars in Westminster School, and the children of the choir, and all the many young men who hear me, am I setting before you an easy or a pleasant task? No! A happy one and a noble, the only happy, the only noble, but not easy, not pleasant. You pray "Thy kingdom come." If you mean to be, as you are sworn to be, its soldiers and servants, you will find it no easy task even to conquer

your own evil passions ; no easy task, but a warfare in which there is no discharge, to secure a tranquil possession of yourselves.

And when this is done, there remains the task of fighting God's battles, in a nominal Church and a wicked world. If you love ease, sloth, money, promotion, the praise of men at the cost of duty and conscience, take them and find the curse and slow death and degradation of the choice ; what Christ offers you is the hundred-fold, indeed, but therewith persecution and the cross. The basest advice I could give you would be to shun opposition, and creep and crawl behind the dominant multitude and the dominant theology, and answer men according to their idols, and *omnia serviliter pro imperio*. The advice I do give you is, since death is near, and God is eternal, scorn to fear or truckle to the wicked or to the many ; do not mind what they say or what they think, but do your duty ; and in doing it, when it is hard and painful, still set your faces like a flint to do it.

I read the other day of a young Indian officer, who, shocked at many evils which he saw around him, began to protest against them, and at once wakened all round himself the hornet swarms of hatred and slander. He went in distress to the gallant Outram, the Bayard of India, who lies buried in yonder nave. "What am I to do amid this storm

of calumny?" he asked in deep distress. Other men might have bidden him to temporise, to bend to the hurricane, to hold his tongue and acquiesce, and get on, and be happy as the flesh counts happiness, and successful as the world counts success. How many are there who thus palter with Eternal God for money or for advancement! But Outram happily was a man who felt the infinite nature of duty; and Outram asked the youth: "Do you fear God or man? If you fear God, do as you are doing, and bear the insults that are heaped upon you. If you fear man and the mess, let everything go on as it is and make no protest."

Even so, if you mean the prayer "Thy kingdom come," act up to it. Do the little every-day duties now, and daily, and strenuously, and sincerely; so you will promote that kingdom most effectually, and the great duties will come to you if God wills. Be it uncertain of issue, be it difficult of performance, be its consequences full of pain, still stick to duty, for duty alone is victorious and eternal. ✓

If I am to say a word to you, for whom this will be the last Sunday of school life, let me tell you this story. In one of the battles during the American Civil War, a young officer stood at a battery which had dwindled down to a single gun. That single gun he loaded again and again, and fired it into the thick darkness with an aim that had been given him

in the light. At last the bugles rang out the victory of his army ; and, said he, " Then I knew that whatever others did, for me a victory meant keeping my own gun loaded and fired." Work in that spirit. Remember that " in God's war slackness is infamy," and in your lives or on your lips there shall be power and healing in the prayer " Thy kingdom come."

THY WILL BE DONE



“Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.”

ST. MATTHEW vi. 10.

IN one sense the prayer is needless. In Nature, in Providence, in the great issues of life, God's will must be done, cannot but be done, for “who hath resisted His will?” Who can interfere with His infinite, uniform, passionless, material forces? Can we stay the march of the tidal wave? Can we prevent the desolating rush of the tornado? Can we bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades or loose the bands of Orion?

No! Nor can we alter the divine issues of earthly events. No tumultuous furies of human passion, no volcanic outbursts of wrath and revolution, change the eternal, inscrutable purpose; nay, they do but help as the blind instruments for its accomplishment. The Psalms and Prophets are full of this thought. God sitteth above the water-floods, and God remaineth a king for ever. God turns to His own praise the fierceness of men and the madness of

the people. Man thinks evil; God overrules it to good.

We find the same fact attested by all pagan experience. The most ancient of the mighty songs of Greece, the "Iliad" of Homer, begins with the words :

Achilles' wrath, to Greece the direful spring
Of woes unnumbered, heavenly goddess, sing !
That wrath which hurled to Pluto's gloomy reign,
The souls of mighty chiefs untimely slain,
Whose limbs unburied on the naked shore,
Devouring dogs and hungry vultures tore,
Since great Achilles and Atrides strove.
Such was the sovereign doom, and such the will of Jove .

But the English poet, in his translation, has lost the grandeur of the original. It is not merely that "such was the will of Zeus," but "and the purpose of Zeus was all along being accomplished."

Were it our immediate subject it might be a matter of interest to illustrate this thought from the wisdom of ancient and modern times. Let one Eastern myth suffice. Arabian legend tells us how once King Solomon and his Grand Vizier stood at the top of a mighty flight of steps which led to the loftiest platform of the Temple, and, as they stood there, the Vizier saw a man, who had been passing, suddenly pause, cast one glance upwards at him, and begin to mount the steps. In that one glance the terrified Vizier recognised the awful features of Azrael, the Angel of Death, and fearing that Azrael's mission

was to him he implored Solomon to lend him his magic carpet. The King assented, and the Vizier wished himself transported at once on the magic carpet to the highest peak of Caucasus. Slowly, with downward gaze, the Angel mounted the steps; and when he found Solomon standing there alone he said, "O King, I glanced at thy Vizier only because, being bidden to summon his soul from Caucasus, I saw him standing here with thee." "Angel," answered the King, "even now he awaits thee on the summit of Caucasus." Thus doth man ever fulfil his destiny in the effort to avoid it; and not men only, but nations.

With what force is this expressed by the early disciples, in that outburst of inspired rapture: "Lord, that didst make the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and all that in them is. . . . Of a truth, against thy holy servant Jesus both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, are gathered together." With what result? To crucify the Son of God? Yes! but even in that stupendous act of rebellion, not to defeat the will of God, but only to carry out the immeasurable mercifulness of His decree; only "to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel foreordained to come to pass." Yes! in that quiet light, "wherein God shows all things in the slow history of their ripening," God's will is the inmost and ultimate harmony of the

world; "all things, both in heaven and earth, do it homage, the very least as feeling its care, and the greatest as not exempted from its power;" and rebel man, be he a Pharaoh, or a Sennacherib, or a Nebuchadrezzar, or a Diocletian, is never more absolutely the plaything and instrument of God's decrees than when his rebellion is most frantic and most determined.

✓ But though in Nature and the issues of destiny God's will is always done, there is another and terribly real sense in which the will of God is not done. I do not need to prove this. We have but to look in the world; we have but to look in our own hearts. In the world what is the meaning of all this want and misery? all this violence and sin and shame? all these lives so grievously wasted? all these faces on which God's image is so deplorably defaced? all this "insane religion, degraded art, merciless war, sullen toil, detestable pleasure, and vain and vile hope in which the nations of the world have lived since first they bear record of themselves?" What is the meaning of all the millions who eat and drink, and indulge their bad passions, and make the world viler, not better; of all whose whole lives have been but one long living death, and who have nothing to give back to God but the dust of diseased bodies, and the catastrophe of shipwrecked souls? Look at the annals even of Christian

Churches. If we were to speak plain truth, not specious and conventional falsities, do we not see how much arrogance, how much formalism, how many fierce antagonisms, have mingled with their history. Consider the execrable intolerance, the usurping apostasies, the persecution of God's best saints, the apathetic attitude towards iniquities at home, the inadequate realisation of vast responsibility to the heathen world abroad, which have marred the work and glory of the Christian Churches. Look into our own hearts! Which of us does not daily and grievously do that which we ought not to have done, and leave undone that which we ought to do?

Let me take but one frightful instance in which, by the mystery of our free will and its resultant choice of sin, the will of God is terribly thwarted. "It is *not* the will of your Father in heaven," said Christ, "that one of these little ones should perish." Ah! do they not perish in millions? Think of the physical degradation; think of the moral waste! Every year hundreds of little children in England alone are overlain by drunken mothers, and most of these on Saturday nights, when the worst work is done by the vile god of our national faithlessness. Every year thousands of little English children die poisoned by the taint in the vitiated blood of their parents. But the perishing is far deadlier in those

who grow up in the gutter and the slum, in our drink-and-greed-created hotbeds for the breeding among us of harlotry and crime. And oh! what a frightful perishing it is! How black, how leprous do the souls become which might have been so fair and innocent!

A story is told of a painter who saw a child so perfect in his beauty that he painted him, and said that if ever he found a face as vile as that face was angelic, he would paint that as a pendant to it. Years passed, and he had not seen a face so absolute in its degradation as that child's in his loveliness. But one day he visited a prison, and there saw a felon, still young, but with a face almost devilish in its vicious demoralisation. He painted this wretched prisoner, and while painting him found, with appalled imagination, that this man was that lovely child, as drink, and lust, and greed, and hate had made him; and the two pictures, it is said, hang side by side in some Italian gallery. But the awful tale they tell is a tale of every day, and in all these cases the holy will of God is not done, but is resisted by the fraud and malice of the devil and of man.

God made the living soul;
The ruined creature is the work of man.

We see, then, the deep need for this prayer, "Thy will be done." Do not think that it is a mere verbal

variation of the two previous petitions. The prayer, "Hallowed be Thy name," invites us to think less of self, more of God; to think but little of self, but to let our souls bathe in the dew of God's grace as in the fountains of the eternal dawn. The prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is an awakening trumpet-call to action, pledging us, unless we make our prayer the prayer of hypocrites, to the furtherance of that kingdom. ✓

This prayer is an appeal to give up our own wills altogether— ✓

Our wills are ours, we know not why,
Our wills are ours to make them Thine ;

and it also sets before us an example as to how we should do it. The clause "as in heaven so on earth" belongs not to this one petition, but to all three.

The prayer, then, forces us to ask four questions, on which depends its sincere and intelligent utterance. What is God's will? By whom is it done in heaven? How do they do it? What is the end at which the petition aims?

i. On the first question we need not linger. Scripture answers it plainly and decisively. "This is the will of God," it says, "even your sanctification." The good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is that we should not live in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but that we should keep God's commandments.

God's will is that we should do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.

ii. The second question is, By whom is it done in Heaven? There is no reference here, as some have fancied, to the stars in their courses, to the moon walking in brightness, and the sun going forth as a bridegroom from his eastern chambers. Most true it is that though they have no speech or language, yet they declare the glory of God. But the allusion is to the angelic host of Heaven; to the burning Cherubim which uphold the chariot of God, and flash hither and thither at His will; to the shining Seraphim, veiled with their six wings, crying "Holy, holy, holy," through the altar incense; to the Morning Stars who at the creation sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy. These, we are told, keep His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word.

Scripture is full of their ministration. They rejoice, they weep, they sing; they do wondrously, ascending in flame to Heaven; they carry souls into Abraham's bosom; they encamp around the dwellings of the just; they exult over one sinner that repents. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation? This, in fact, is almost the only thing revealed to us about them. "We know that they are spirits in nature," says Donne, the poet-preacher,

“but what the nature of a spirit is we know not. We know that they are creatures, but whether created with this world or long before we know not. They are creatures that have not so much of a body as flesh is, as froth is, as a vapour is, as a sigh is; and yet, with a touch, they shall moulder a rock into less atoms than the sand it stands upon, and a millstone into smaller flour than it grinds. They are creatures made, yet not a minute older now than when they were first made, if they were made before all measure of time began; nor, if they were made in the beginning of time, and are now six thousand years old, have they one wrinkle of age in their faces, or one sob of weariness in their lungs. They are *primogeniti Dei*, God’s eldest sons, and if we may offencelessly express it so, *œnigmata divina*, the riddles of heaven, the perplexities of speculation.” What is told us respecting them is not for the luxury of the imagination, it is for the example of our lives. “As Thine angels make sacrifice to Thee of their own will,” pray the humbled spirits in Dante, “ever singing Hosanna, so may men do with theirs.”

iii. These, then, are they by whom God’s will is done in heaven. How is it done? Alas! as differently as possible from the slack and unwilling way in which it is done on earth! God’s angels, we know, do it contentedly and unquestioningly, whatever it is. If it be a mission of seeming wrath, as

was theirs whose sword of waving flame drove man from Paradise; or his who met Balaam in the narrow path; or those who in ten thousand times ten thousand flashed amid the rolling clouds of Sinai; or his who burned with the lurid light of plague over the threshing-floor of Araunah; or his who spread his wings on the blast and slew those thousands in the camp of Assyria; or theirs who carry the seven vials full of the wrath of God; or theirs who thrust their sharp sickles into the vine of earth and reap—they know it is a message of mercy hidden, no less than when it is such a message of mercy manifested, as was his who stayed the knife of Abraham upraised to slay his son; or theirs who hurried Lot out of burning Sodom; or theirs whose fiery rapture broke into melodies when Christ was born in Bethlehem; or his who comforted the fainting Saviour under the moonlight in Gethsemane; or theirs who behold in heaven the face of the Father's little ones; or theirs who seize their harps to hymn their joy over the sinners who repent. They do God's work unquestioningly

And they do it cheerfully.

Man has his insect ambition, his ephemeral distinctions. To the angels, if it be God's will, it is just as dignified to sweep a room as to rule a kingdom. When Raphael conducted to Babylonia the boy Tobias and his dog,

He did God's will ; to him all one
Or on the earth, or in the sun.

They feel that

God's puppets are we, one and all,
There is no great or small.

The Mahometans, who believe many beautiful things about angels, have in one chapter of their Koran the story how Gabriel, as he waited by the gates of gold, was sent by God to earth to do two things. One was to prevent King Solomon from the sin of forgetting the hour of prayer in exultation over his royal steeds ; the other to help a little yellow ant on the slope of Ararat, which had grown weary in getting food for its nest, and which would otherwise perish in the rain. To Gabriel the one behest seemed just as kingly as the other, seeing that God had ordered it.

Silently he left
The Presence, and prevented the king's sin,
And help the little ant at entering in.

To those myriads of waiting ministrants

Nought is too high or low,
Too mean or mighty, if God wills it so ;
Neither is any creature, great or small,
Beyond His pity, which embraceth all ;
Nor any ocean rolls so vast that He
Forgets one wave of all that restless sea.

And then they do God's will, not only unquestioningly, cheerfully, but zealously, swift as the hurri-

cane, vividly as the lightning. He maketh His angels winds, and His messengers a flaming fire; and it may be true, as one has said, that "Nature is not inanimate; her works are duties;" and that her works, so fearful and so beautiful, are wrought by the ministries of these great and holy beings, so that "every breath of air and ray of light and heat, every beautiful prospect, is, as it were, the skirts of their garments and the waving of the robes of those who see God in heaven."

And they do it harmoniously. There are no jealousies among the angels; no cut-throat competitions; no base rivalries as to which shall do "the maximum of service on the minimum of grace." They do not slander and belittle and intrigue against each other.

Our life is like a narrow raft
Afloat upon the hungry sea,
Whereon is but a little space;
And each man, eager for a place,
Doth thrust his brother in the sea.
And so the sea is salt with tears
And so our life is worn with fears.

But among the angels Gabriel does not envy Michael, nor Michael vex Gabriel. Raphael rejoices in Uriel's sunlike brightness, and Uriel in Raphael's enchanting grace.

It is the characteristic of this world that envy rages against merit; that success awakens antipathy;

but it is not so above. When, in the great white rose of Paradise, Dante asks, "Whether the spirits in the outermost spheres do not long for a higher and nearer place?" all the spirits glow into a happy smile, and Piccarda tells him that the will of them all is so absolutely the will of God that they do not dream of desiring anything but what God wills. Their lower place pleases them, because it pleases Him, and Dante says :

Then saw I clearly how each spot in heaven
Is paradise, though with like gracious dew
The supreme virtue shower not over all.

And when we consider all this joyous, unbroken, zealous, loving disinterested service, we see more reason to admire the dying meditation of our great Richard Hooker, who, when asked on his deathbed the subject of his thoughts, answered that, after perceiving that this life was full of perturbations, he was meditating the number and nature of the angels, and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace would not be in heaven ; and, "Oh!" he added, "that it might be so on earth!"

Such, then, is the scope of this petition. Surely, when we consider all this, we should find it full of deeper and more blessed meaning. But, to conclude, as in the case of each petition, the prayer involves a pledge ; its utterance implies a duty. Oh, that we all felt more those sayings of the old Rabbis : "The

day is short, the work abundant, the labourers remiss, the reward great, the Master presses"; therefore "be bold as a leopard, swift as an eagle, bounding as a stag, brave as a lion, to do the will of thy Father which is in heaven."

We should feel all this more if we were true Christians. The will of God, in these lower regions of distortion and perversion, does not work automatically. It is His will that all work *for* man should, with the help of His grace, be done *by* man. "Well, God mend all!" said Lord Rea, in 1630. "Nay," impatiently exclaimed Sir David Ramsay, "nay, Donald, we must help Him to mend it."

God cannot make man's best
Without best men to help Him.

Now the quintessence of the will of God and the quintessence of the way in which angels do, and men should do, God's work is love; for God is love. And this our sweet poet, Edmund Spenser, saw when he wrote of the angels:

How oft do they their silver bowers leave
To come to succour us that succour want!
How oft do they with golden pinions cleave
The flitting skies like flying pursuivant,
Against foul fiends to aid us militant!
They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,
And their bright squadrons round about us plant,
And all for love, and nothing for reward:
O why should heavenly God to men have such regard?

Yet God has given us a nearer, dearer, truer example even than that of His angels. He has given us His Son as a divine and perfect ensample, that we should walk in His steps. His life and death are the eternal model of how God's work should be done, alike on earth and in heaven. For that will is best done when we kill in us all the desires of self, and lose ourselves in Him.

In that mighty poem of Dante, the "Divina Commedia," which contains some of the deepest religious thought of the Christian world, after the poet has been conducted through the lurid abysses of Hell, and up the steep mountain terraces of Purgatory, and through the Rose of Paradise, he ends with the vision of the Triune God. The moral purport and end of all that burning revelation to the poet's soul was simply to make him see that the will of God is love, and to make his will accordant with the love of God. Final blessedness for man is reached with the entire surrender of his will to the love of God; and he ends the poem with the four lines—

Here vigour failed the towering fantasy,
 But now my will rolled onward, like a wheel
 In even motion, by the love impelled,
 Which moves the sun in heaven and all the stars.

This petition, then, expresses that which it is the one true purpose of human life to teach.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Teach me, my God, and King,
In all things Thee to see,
And what I do in anything
To do it as for Thee.

A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine ;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

“Give us this day our daily bread.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 11.

IN preaching on this “epitome of the Gospel,” this “pearl of prayers,” my object has been so directly practical, that I have not had time for questions of criticism. I will only remark, in passing, that in this petition there are two slight variations between St. Matthew and St. Luke.

St. Matthew has δὸς—“give in one act;” St. Luke has δίδου—“be giving,” “give us continuously.” “St. Matthew,” says Dr. Vaughan, “touches the readiness, St. Luke the steadiness; St. Matthew the promptitude, St. Luke the patience of God’s supply.”

Again, St. Matthew says “this day,” St. Luke says “day by day.” St. Matthew implies “Sufficient to each day is the want thereof;” St. Luke says: “And if there be a to-morrow, for it also God will provide.”

We descend, then, in this prayer, from the spiritual heights of the three former petitions. When we

pray: "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," we are moving on sunlit altitudes; we breathe empyreal air. We bathe earth in heaven; we forget self in God; we dilate, as it were, and conspire with the life of the Eternal, and rise above our own infinitesimal littleness. The petitions uplift us above that petty pride and ludicrous conceit which degrades us so low. For in ourselves, however we strut and shout and give ourselves airs, we are nothing, and less than nothing; insects of an hour, crushed before the moth. It is in God alone that we can attain the least greatness, the least significance. Well may we cry, "Lord, what is man that Thou art mindful of him?" And to that question comes the twofold answer. On the one hand, by himself, apart from God, man is a thing of nought, his time passeth away like a shadow; on the other, when self is lost in God, when to man's wretchedness God adds His own all-complete infinitude, then "Thou makest him a little lower than the angels, to crown him with glory and honour."

But alas! man cannot always or only live on these ethereal heights. A thousand daily infirmities, strong temptations, and bodily necessities, remind him incessantly that he is but dust. Disastrous failure always attends the vaulting ambition which would

fain sever itself from the common needs of humanity
and wind itself

Too high
For sinful man beneath the sky.

When man invents his own methods of saintliness the results are deplorable. The rude violence of fourth century hermits; the rancour and aberrations of monks; the half-dazed imbecility of Stylites, the strange arrogance of ascetics, as ecclesiastical history reveals them, involve a solemn warning against the silly attempt to ignore the fact that though we *are* spirits we *have* bodies. Yes! we are poor miserable human beings, living in the body of our humiliation, in our house of clay. God neither requires, nor encourages, the absurdity of pretending that we can destroy our bodily needs. There is not in Christ's teaching one touch which sanctions that *ἀλαζονεία*—that unreality and braggart vaunt—of religionism which has led to so many sham forms of holiness and self-satisfying ideals of worship.

In this prayer He recognises our human needs, and bids us ask the All-Father that of His bounty they may be supplied. Were we to pray this prayer alone, our praying would be as material as the howling of the young lions or the raven's cry. Were we to offer only the other petitions without this, our prayers might become fantastic and impractical—the prayers of ascetic dreamers, not the prayers of real human

life. The combination of the two reminds us that though we are but mortal men, yet we see what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us that we should be called children of God!

And so, both for warning and for blessedness, Christ puts this one earthly petition in the prayer He taught us. "All the rest," says Archbishop Leighton, "are for things spiritual, and but one for temporals; those that regard the glory of God as the chief, are three to one with it; and those that concern our own spiritual good, two for one. Thus for the number. And as for the order or place, it suits very well with this, the *least* of our requests, and so to be accounted by us. The prayer begins spiritually, and closes so, and this petition is cast in the middle." But though, out of the seven petitions—three for God's glory and three for our souls—there is this one for *earthly* things; yet every word of this one, as we shall see, rebukes our earthliness.

"Give us, O Father:" what a lovely prayer it is, thus simply uttered; what a world of gratitude, of filial dependence, of devout acknowledgment lies in it! The prayer is broad and simple. There is nothing in it of that pestering importunity of the sturdy vagrant, that base whine of greedy mendicity, which we have already seen to be the bane of prayer. We say "give," because even when the bread is given

and the water sure, we hourly remind ourselves whence it comes.

“Carnal men,” it has been said, “are like swine, which ravin upon the acorns, but look not up to the oak whence they drop.” I hope that none of you neglect the good old simple, beautiful practice of “grace before meat,” and that, by teaching the significance of it to your children, you save them from the “inexpressible calamity” of living lives which do not habitually look upwards to their source. Why should we live in the world as orphans, by not knowing our Heavenly Father, or strut through it in silly disregard of Him? I find that sometimes, at the splendid banquets of the wealthy, the practice of saying grace is falling into neglect, and I am sorry for it. We ought not to sit down to the simplest meal, much more to God’s choicest bounties—to tables radiant with the richest fruits and the loveliest flowers—without humbly and thankfully acknowledging the Giver. The very Pagans did so.

The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye
Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart
Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed
That timely light.

The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill or gushing fount and thanked
The Naiad.

What a happy anecdote is that of St. Francis of

Assisi, who, once sitting down with Brother Masseo to eat his poor meal from a table of natural rock beside a gushing fountain, kept exclaiming again and again, "We are not worthy of such a treasure." "How can you talk of a treasure," grumbled Fra Masseo, "when poverty is so hard upon us?" "What we have is our treasure," answered Francis, "and this table is to me rich and precious, where nothing has been prepared by the work of man, but all given by the hand of God."

And what but godless indifference can prevent us from thus acknowledging Him who giveth food to all flesh? Is it, forsooth, the immense pretentiousness of science? What is our vaunted science, after all, but the soaring of an insect? We live on the products of the earth, growing in the soil, or transmuted by Nature's stupendous alchemy into the beast or winged fowl. Did science make the grass to grow upon the mountains, and green herb for the use of man? Did science create the warmth and the moisture which cause the dead seeds to germinate, and roll over the laughing and singing fields in billows of golden grain? Was it our petty science that kindled the great sun flaming in the zenith, or supplies its millions of leagues of torrent and tumultuous fire? Was it science which drew the waters by evaporation through the pellucid air from the inviolate sea, and winnowed them in the

pure laboratory of the ether with the wings of all the winds, and made them hang iridescent in the rainbow's arch, or gleam with crimson and amethyst when they drift athwart the sunset as with the plumage of angels' wings? Was it science which poured them gently down to earth again in the refreshfulness of silver rains, or caused them to glide at evening into the bosom of the rose, and hang like diamonds on the twinkling herbage of the morning fields? How can science dare to deny the supernatural, when it is infinitely impotent to perform the most insignificant of these stupendous miracles, which in their boundless complexity surround each instant of our existence? Could all the science in the world create one grain of wheat? Science knows not even what life is; how, then, could it thrill into inorganic matter one spark of that sacred fire?

Let us put away these follies of unbelief, which, in the name of pseudo-science (for all true science is humble and adores) bid us thanklessly take the daily gift, while we ignore or deny the daily Giver. Let us rather know the filial joy of humble thankfulness, while, like those early Christians, breaking our bread at home, we take our food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God. Otherwise we do but bar God out of our hearts with His own gifts, and make our life like

The pleachèd bower
Where honeysuckles, ripened by the sun
Forbid the sun to enter.

Therefore, give, O Father ; give *us*. We will not say—Christ would not have us say—give *me*. Prayers purely selfish are altogether base. We will not ask *anything* for ourselves alone. All our prayers shall be in the spirit of the large and lovely petition, “That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men.” In temporal things we will not foster in ourselves that hateful egotism which, when there would otherwise be enough for all, clutches and accumulates for self alone ; nor, so far as the prayer is spiritual, will we cherish that immeasurable religious selfishness which sings hallelujahs over itself, as it clings to its own plank of supposed safety amid the weltering surge.

No ! give *us* ! Give, O Father, to those whom we hate, and those who without a cause hate us ; to those whom we despise, and those who despise us. Give to all by whose stupidity, or by whose malice, we are injured ; to all by whose greed or vileness we are repelled. We are all sinners ; we all share the same fallen nature. We are all God's prodigals ; all brothers in the same great family ; all equally guilty, all equally redeemed. We cannot separate ourselves even from the worst and lowest of our fellow-men. Father, Thy Christ teaches us

that we are all one in Him: forgive our hatreds, our mutual lies, the malice with which we destroy one another, the littleness by which we Thy children are to each other the sorest, surest ill. Thus, even in the one prayer for ourselves does Christ rebuke our selfishness. Father, give us!

And give us *this day*. We are but creatures of a day; we will not be troubled and anxious about the morrow. Sufficient for the day its want, its good, its evil. To-day is ours; to-morrow is Thine, as yesterday is Thine. We will ask for no accumulations. If Thou hast given us much, we will no more trust in ourselves than if we had nothing; and if we have nothing for to-morrow, we trust Thee still. By this narrowing of the too large horizons of earthly hopes, by this reproof of the enormity and boundlessness of our desires, Thou teachest us to trust wholly in Thee for our exiguous earthly needs. Oh save us from the gnawing cares, the feverish anxieties, of that distrust of Thee, out of which the love of money springs. Save us from the base eagerness of gambling speculation, "the hasting to be rich, the endless scheming, the pitiful coiling and uncoiling and self-involved returns of fantastic hopes and deep depression in individuals, the reactions of mad prosperity and intense suffering in nations." Save us from the spirit of the rich fool, who, heedless of all the misery around, cared only

to pull down his barns and build greater, and to bid his soul "eat, drink, and be merry." Save us from this vile acquisitiveness of Mammon-worship, lest on our souls, as on his, should come crashing down the doom which shattered all his greedy and selfish dreams: "Thou fool, this night they require of thee thy soul!"

Give us, then, *this day*. There is a living in and for the present, without either forecast or retrospect, which is more worthy of a beast than of a man; but there is also a wise and holy living in the present, which Christ would teach us, because the present alone is ours. There is a foolish and dangerous lingering in the past, which Christ reproves when He says, "Let the dead bury their dead," and St. Paul when he says, "Forgetting those things that are behind." There is also a morbid and faithless living in the future, the mother of anxiety and discontent, which Christ reproves when He says, "Be not over-anxious about the morrow, for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself." Thus, even in passing Christ would teach us to use rightly the passing hour. "Take one step onward, and secure that step." Live out, truly and nobly, the life of each day, day by day. Not an attempted supernatural life, for you are a man, not an angel; not a wicked life, for you are a man and not a fiend; not a sensual life, for you are a man and not

a beast; not a frivolous life, for you are a man and not an insect. But live each day the true life of a man to-day. Not yesterday's life only, lest you become a murmurer, nor to-morrow's, lest you become a visionary; but the life of to-day, with happy yesterdays and confident to-morrows; the life of to-day unwounded by the Parthian arrows of yesterday, and—come calamity, come sorrow—still trustful to God for to-morrow's golden peace. "Repent," said R. Johanan ben Zaccai to his pupils, "one day before your death." "Does a man, then, know the day of his death?" they asked. "So much the more," was the reply, "let him repent to-day lest he should die to-morrow. So will his whole life be one of repentance."

Father, give us this day *our* daily bread. Every word of this prayer, though it be the humblest of the seven petitions, is still a word of pure gold. It is full of meaning that we ask for our daily bread. It is only the just, the diligent, the moderate, who can rightly use the prayer. The bread of the idle, of those who merely consume the fruits of earth to which they add nothing, of those 'who sit down to the feast of life and slink off without paying their reckoning,' is not their own bread. Again, the bread of the greedy, which they heap up for themselves while others starve, the bread of those who die avaricious and selfish millionaires, is not their own

bread. And the bread of the rapacious, who live by cheating others of their just dues, or tempting them to their ruin, is not their own bread. On the bread of these a curse rests.

“A noble heart,” says Barrow, “will disdain to subsist, like a drone, on the honey gained by others’ labour; or, like vermin, to filch its food from the public granary; or, like a shark, to prey on the lesser fry; but will, one way or other, earn his subsistence, for he that doth not earn can hardly own his bread. When we say ‘Give us our daily bread,’ we pray, even in that one word, that we may live lives of happy industry and honest aim.”

Give us this day our *daily* bread. The word *daily* is in the original a difficult word. It occurs here, and nowhere else in all Greek literature. It has been rendered “supersubstantial,” a sacramentarian meaning idly dragged into it by false philology. It has been rendered “sufficient,” in the sense of “feed me with food convenient for me.” It has been rendered “bread for the morrow,” as in a prayer offered at evening, when the Jewish day began. It has been rendered “bread for our subsistence.” But the greatest scholars rightly acquiesce in the rendering “daily,” which remains unaltered in the Revised Version. It deepens the teaching that we are to live as children in our Father’s house, relying on God’s

providence for all that lies beyond the immediate need.

Lastly, all for which we here ask God is *bread*, the staff, the maintenance of our natural life. It includes all that is necessary, and it comes to us day by day, as the manna came to Israel in the wilderness from heaven. They were not allowed to gather more than for the day; if they greedily and disobediently did so, it stank and bred worms and grew corrupt. And as was the manna to them, so is the bread to us, symbolical of something beyond itself. It means, as the spirits in Dante sing it:—

Our daily manna give to us to-day,
Without which, whoso through this desert drear
Journeys, goes back though pressing on his way.

Here, as everywhere, Christ's teaching lays the axe at the root of all our sensual desires for gluttonies, luxuries, and superfluities. The Israelites, though they had their heavenly manna, basely sighed for the leeks and fleshpots of Egypt. Lust came upon them in the wilderness, and they tempted God in the desert. And God gave them their own desire; they were not disappointed of their lust. But to teach them that He loves contentment, simplicity, and moderation, and would not have us like foul drunkards, and

Men full of meat whom most His soul abhors,

therefore "He sent leanness withal into their souls." While the meat was yet in their mouths the heavy wrath of God came upon them, and slew the mightiest of them, yea, and smote down the chosen men that were in Israel.

By bidding us ask only for our daily bread, Christ would teach us that, when we long for surfeitings and drunkenness, we are but "like rats that ravin to our proper bane"; and that when we yearn for and heap up riches, we are but hewing to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, which will hold no water. He would teach us that a man's life consisteth not in the multitude of things that he possesseth. He would teach us the folly of imagining "that there is happiness in having much, when reason, and religion, and experience try in vain to teach us the contrary." He would point us the way to the true riches: that holy and trustful love which makes even the struggle for existence, and the wear and tear of daily life, "not like the convict's trample on the world's great treadmill, but like an ascent on the luminous steps of duty to the very gates of heaven."

And that is why this prayer, though it be a frank and simple prayer for bodily needs, is a prayer for much more than mere bodily needs—a prayer, as our Catechism rightly explains it, for "all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies." For "man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that

proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Christ is the Bread of Life. Life apart from Him is not life, but death. We pray, then, here for our spirits also; ✓
 "Lord evermore give us this bread, that we hunger no more, neither thirst any more." So rich, so sweet, so full of divine instruction is even this simplest and seemingly earthliest clause of the prayer which Christ hath taught.

Father: for of Thee all fatherhood in heaven and on earth is named, and Thee we love, and in Thee we put our trust; *give*: for there is no true gift save those which come from Thee, and all other gifts, however bathed in deceitful glamour, are but curses in disguise; *give us*, for may we never ask anything for ourselves alone, but meet always on "the equal platform of creatureship and redemption," where Thou, who madest all souls, lovest the souls that Thou hast made. Give us *this day*: for the day is Thine, and the night is Thine, and if Thou takest away our breath we die, and return again to our dust. Give us this day *our bread*: let us injure none, defraud none, keep back from none, but earn in honest labour, and repay by gratitude and mercy to our fellow-men. Give us this day our *daily bread*: that only which pertains to us, which is convenient for us, which is sufficient for our sustenance, hating gluttonous excesses, and intemperate revellings. Give us this day our *daily bread*: day by day the bread for this

life, the living bread, the bread which came down from heaven, even the Son of Man who is in heaven, which if any eat he shall live for ever—even the Spirit which He giveth us, and the words that He speaketh unto us—for they are spirit and they are life.

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES

“And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 12.

WE have all of us repeated the Lord's Prayer many thousands of times in our lives ; how little has the best and wisest of us realised the fulness of its divine significance ! I trust that, in these brief studies, some of us may have at least caught a glimpse of the truth that not one petition of it is needless or fantastic ; that each clause is not only an act of humility and submission, but that, one by one, they are a lesson, a warning, an exhortation, a trumpet-call to action. But have you noticed how, in the divine construction of the prayer, there is a whole theology, a complete Gospel ? how it places us before God in every aspect of our natural life ?

Glance again at the clauses we have already considered.

“*Our Father which art in heaven.*” There, striking the key-note of all prayer, Christ teaches

us the purity and majesty of the Eternal, and bids us come before Him, on the one hand, with reverence and godly-fear, on the other, with the perfect love and confidence of accepted children.

“*Hallowed be Thy name.*” There we are taught to lose ourselves, as in a sea of light, in the ocean of His infinite holiness.

“*Thy kingdom come.*” There the hope and promise is given us of a regenerated world, and we are called to devote our lives to its furtherance.

“*Thy will be done.*” There we are invited to surrender altogether to God that element in us whence springs all our rebellion and all our misery, and to learn that the sole end of life is to acquire perfect uniformity with the will of our Maker.

“*As in heaven so on earth.*” In that sub-clause is set before us the pattern and example for our own practical realisation of those three spiritual petitions.

Then the note is changed. We cease to breathe empyreal atmosphere. We descend from heaven to earth. In the humble prayer, “*Give us this day our daily bread,*” we present ourselves to God as poor, needy, human creatures. Once more in this prayer, “*Forgive us our trespasses,*” we reveal another and yet lower depth of our humiliation, and come before God, not only as helpless pensioners, but alas! as rebellious children. As the first three petitions soar

upwards like doves with silver wings and covered with feathers like gold, so the three that follow sink low among the broken potsherds of earth, and man appears before God unworthy and defaced; first, as a needy creature—*Give us our daily bread*; next as a guilty creature—*Forgive us our sins*; next as a tempted and imperilled creature—*Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One*. When we offer these petitions we say with the poet:

Four things which are not in Thy treasury,
 We lay before thee, Lord, with this petition—
 Our nothingness, our wants,
 Our sins, and our contrition.
 Oh, meet our needs for all
 From thy rich mercy free!

The first three petitions might have been offered by Adam and Eve while yet they sat under the palms of Paradise; this one can have no meaning but on the lips of a fallen race.

There come moments to us all in which, as Cardinal Newman said, we only recognise the existence of two supreme and luminously self-evident entities, God and our own souls. In this petition the soul of each of us, as the guilty member of a guilty race, flings itself with all its fellow sinners in penitent self-abasement on

The world's great altar-stairs
 That slope through darkness up to God.

The first thing felt by the soul of man, when once it begins to know what itself is and what God is, is the sense of guilt and dread. Nothing is idler than to say that it is only Christianity which has cast over the race the awful gloom caused by this sense of guilt. All literature, all history refutes that allegation. The shuddering sense of guilt in man's heart, attested by human sacrifices and horrible self-tortures, is found in every form, and even every travesty of religion, from the fetish-worship of the South Seas, to the horrors which crept even into sceptical Paganism, and even to those perversions of mediæval Christianity which tended to degrade it from glad tidings of great joy into a religion of priestly tyranny, ascetic self-torture, and ghastly fear. Fear has lain at the centre of all heathen systems. Men have shuddered at the sense of guilt; they have trembled through all their bones at the tremendous thought of God. They had no gospel; they knew no doctrine of the remission of sins. Feeling guilt, and ignorant of its remedy, the votaries of Pagan systems have sunk into lewd despair, or contented themselves with the wild cry—

Place me alone in some frail boat,
Mid the horrors of an angry sea,
Where I, while time shall move, may float
Despairing either land or day;

Or under earth my youth confine
 To the night and silence of a cell,
 Where scorpions round my limbs may twine,
 Oh! God, so Thou forgive me hell.

But Christ has not given us the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father! In Christ perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. Christ alone taught us to approach our heavenly Father with boldness, and to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

We have here two things: the appeal "Forgive us," and the ground of it, "as we forgive." But this morning we must pass over that added clause altogether, since we shall have no time to do more than glance at the awful mysteries involved in the petition "Forgive us our trespasses."

St. Matthew has the word "debts" (*ὀφειλήματα*); St. Luke says "sins" (*ἁμαρτίας*). The words which indicate the aberration of our race are "mournfully numerous," but each of them presents but a different aspect of the one immense insuperable mystery, the mystery of all mysteries, the trial of all faith, the anguish and ruin of all nature, the plague of every individual heart. The commonest word for sin in Scripture is *ἁμαρτία*. It means the missing of a mark; it emphasises the truth that sin is a blunder and a ruin; that sin

means failure; and that a life spent in sin is a life which loses the very end—yes, and every end—for which alone it was created. Other words in the Bible are *ἀνομία*, lawlessness; *παρακοή*, hearing amiss, or disobedience; *παράβασις*, trespass, going across the boundary, transgression; *παράπτωμα*, fault, falling aside, moral aberration; *ἥττημα*, defeat, discomfiture; *ἀσέβεια*, impiousness; *πλημμέλεια*, disharmony, a metaphor from music, as when Shakespeare says :

How sour sweet music is
When time is broke, and no proportion kept,
So is it with the music of men's lives;

or as when Milton tells how, making us out of tune with heaven,

Disproportioned sin
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord.

These words, you will see, indicate sin alike in its nature and in its results. They indicate sin in its nature as a violation of the commandment, as a transgression of the law, as a stepping over the boundary, as a refusal to listen to the voice of God; and sin in its miserable results, as a failure, a defeat, a losing of the way, a missing of the aim, a ruin of the purpose for which alone we were created, a harsh chromatic jar, spoiling and jangling the tune of God into horrible discordancy.

But the notion prominent in our Lord's Prayer, as recorded in both Evangelists, is that of debt; for St. Luke has "Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive every one who is indebted to us." If any of you have known the shame, the guilt, the burden, the misery of wilful debt, the concealment to which it leads, the dishonesty which it implies, the way in which it adds to all other temptations, and usually ends in other forms of guilt, the impossibility it leaves of looking the whole world in the face, its tendency to accumulate into an avalanche of disgrace and ruin—you will understand the metaphor. It will help to show you also how the sin and the punishment are identical.

Sin is not one thing and penalty another; but penalty is the inevitable reaction of sin, the inseparable shadow which is cast by it and dogs it. And all sin is of the nature of debt. It is a vast three-fold debt, against which there are no assets, which man incurs to himself, to his neighbour, and to his God. For himself he received his body so beautiful, so marvellous, so capable as a mechanism of health and strength and service; the intellect so receptive, so enriched with galleries for glowing pictures of the imagination, so adapted both "to spin the gossamers and forge the anchors" of noble happiness; the spirit, endowed with the wings of angels to uplift man into a creature of the skies. How has he used

these gifts? Alas! in what multitude of cases the shortened life, the shattered health, the vice-marred countenance, the dishonoured members, are the fruits of disease and death accumulated by the debt contracted with himself in his mortal body by dissipation and excess; and the intellect weakened by indolence, and the polluted imagination, and the haunted memory; and the soul swept by "the gusts of vexatious, fretful, lawless passions." How shameful is the wrong men do, how terrible the debt they owe, to their own selves; and what debts to their neighbours! Oh, there are men around whom the curses of their fellow-men wait hungry-eyed for all the wrongs that they have done through all their selfish, ill-flavoured lives. Think of those who have lived by oppression, robbery and wrong; think of those whose fraudulent banks and bubble companies and gambling speculations have plunged into ruin the widow and the fatherless; think of those who all their lives long have systematically slandered their neighbours; think of those whose uncleanness has crowded miserable cities with human beings whose lives are a clinging curse to others and a living death to themselves. And there is that debt of ten thousand talents to God! Oh, who shall measure it? Do not our lives often look to us like one black night of sins of omission, lightened through by sins of commission? Even if we had

only committed sins which our seared consciences consider as *little* sins, if they seem light when we *measure*, are they light when we *number* them? "Dead leaves fall one by one." They float down so lightly that they hardly ripple the glassy mirror of a stream; but when they are driven by the wind into putrescent heaps, are they nothing then? So is it with the ever accumulating offences of the hours, days, weeks, months, years of our mortal life. And all our sins are remembered, all recorded, in our memories, in our consciences, indelibly in that awful book which lies ever open at the foot of the throne of God.

Such, my friends, are "our debts," "our trespasses," and as long as they are unforgiven, not only are their results inevitable, but their results are implicit. As regards ourselves, those results form a distorting mist, in which we see all things falsely, taking the shadow for the substance, and the substance for the shadow. They are a darkness, in which the very light in us is darkness, because passion has extinguished it. They are a weight, so bending us that we are not able to look up. They are a fretting leprosy, taking stronger hold of us; they are a paralysis, benumbing our will with impotence, and handing us over helpless to the iron scourge of despair. And as regards God, they are an awful sense of terror and alienation, in which He

has fallen silent to us, and hides His countenance from us. And so, when sin has become habit, and habit character, and character has assumed the dreadful guise of necessity, our guilt "sinks the soul into deeper darkness; fires it with more burning antagonism; freezes it in a more stagnant isolation." Well may the poor crushed sinner cry from such an abhorrent prison, "Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

Forgive us our trespasses. Oh, with what groanings that cannot be uttered, should we breathe that prayer, if we had but faith to feel that, when uttered from the heart, it gains for us the indescribable blessedness of the man whose unrighteousness is forgiven, whose sin is covered. But, taking advantage of our lusts, Satan says to us "This cannot be." There can be no forgiveness of sins. Look round you:—in the natural world there is no forgiveness of sins. You have sinned against yourself. Can you get back the health wrecked by the dissipation of your youth? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? In sins against your neighbour, can you recall the poison of your evil example, of your whispered temptation, of your slanderous word? As well try to stop the stone which you have set rolling on the mountain-side!

Omnipotence itself cannot recall the word once

uttered; cannot undo the deed once done. So Satan whispers to us, "You are mine. Resist no longer, for it is vain."

Ah, my friends! you who have on your souls the burden of guilt, or the stain of sin—and who has not?—listen not to Satan and despair, but to Him who taught you daily to pray, "Father, forgive us our trespasses." It is a gospel; it is a miracle; it is true that there is nothing like it in the world of nature or of man. It is avowedly supernatural. It is exclusively the gift of God. With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. "Was ever miracle greater than this miracle?" it has been truly asked. "To roll back the Red Sea or the Jordan upon itself were easier surely, far easier than this"—this undoing of the thing done, this cancelling of the unpayable debt? But, for this miracle, He who cannot lie teaches us to pray. He not only tells us that sin can be forgiven, but, knowing that we come before Him as guilty creatures, He bids us ask daily cleansing for daily assuagement, and daily plead with God, "Father, ἀφεε — forgive, remit, send away, destroy our trespasses; make them as though they had never been."

When Satan would inspire into us a disbelief in the efficacy of this prayer, let us confront him with Christ's whole Gospel. It all turns upon this—that

sin can be forgiven, always; can be forgiven, utterly; supernaturally, not naturally; in Christ, not in ourselves. What is promised?—Is sin a debt? It shall be cancelled. Is it a handwriting against us? It shall be annulled, torn across, blotted out, its rent fragments nailed to the cross of Christ. Is it a deadly stain? “Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” Is it the shattered tablets of broken laws? God has promised to silence their menaces, and deliver us from their curse. Is it a mass of fatal evidence? God shall seal it up, fling it behind His back, cast it into the depths of the sea, put it far from us as the east is from the west, or heaven from earth. Is it a prison-house? He who came to preach deliverance to the captives hath burst the gates of brass, and shattered the bars of iron in sunder. Oh, if the words for sin are mournfully numerous, the metaphors for its remission are yet more gloriously varied. It is not only that in the next life the entail of curse shall be cut off, but the very body of sin destroyed. “Nothing indeed,” as St. Augustine says, “is so much our own as our sins;” but God can purge our conscience from them. Does justice require their inexorable penalty? Mercy triumphs over justice. Are our sins too great to be forgiven? Their very greatness constitutes the

force of our appeal to Him. "Be merciful unto my sin, for it is great."

And if all these promises be insufficient to convince you, think of all who have tested and found them true. Think of those bidden wedding guests at the great King's table, to all of whom, soiled from the waysides and the hedges, was given the wedding garment of the King's Son; think of all the prodigals who have come, so weary and so foot-sore, so sick, so disgraced, so stained, from the far land and the swine, for whom there has still been the best robe and the rejoicing welcome. Think of all those polluted souls who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Think of poor cheating Jacob, who became Israel, a Prince with God. Think of David, the murderer and adulterer, to whom God yet restored the clean heart and the free spirit. Think of cursing and swearing Peter, think of savage, persecuting Paul, who yet became chief among the Apostles. Think of the penitent robber on the cross; the rough jailor; the thievish runaway. Think of the ignoble, swindling publicans, who did not beat upon their breasts in vain; think of the harlots, the common infamy, out of whom He cast the seven devils of sensuality, and who were not pushed back when they wept upon His feet. These entered into the kingdom of heaven before priests and Pharisees,

because it is the helpless, who know their helplessness, to whom Christ came. Much forgiven, they loved much. Think of St. Augustine, the impure African boy; of St. Jerome, the once lewd youth; of St. Cyprian, the once arrogant worldling. Think of all those heathen converts, once fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners, but afterwards saints of God and dear children, washed, cleansed, justified, sanctified. Think even of all the demoniacs, sitting at last at Christ's feet, clothed and in their right mind.

Why was there, and is there, and why has there ever been, this forgiveness so large, so full, so free, but because Christ bore for us the crushing burden, and paid for us the immeasurable debt? Why, but because Christ loved us so much even while we were yet sinners, and thought our souls worth so much, sinful though they were, that He came down to earth to live for us as a sinless man, and die for us as a hated malefactor? But for Him our sins would be indeed incurable; the whole head would be sick, and the whole heart faint, and there would be no balm in Gilead, and no physician there. Brethren, it was this Saviour who taught this prayer. Would He have made these promises only to mock us by their refusal? Will you disbelieve Him who is the Truth itself? If so many myriads

of sinners have been forgiven, and converted into saints, what prevents that you too should be received graciously, loved freely, forgiven wholly, and be born again; and, having been vile and guilty, should be clothed in white robes, and become pure and clean and loving? Be sure that, if we pray it aright, our prayer will be answered.

Are you worse than all these? Well, and if you were, the greater is your need, the deeper is His compassion. His office is to save; yours to look to Him for help. Are you the slave of evil tempers and raging passions? Go to Him as some demoniac. Has utter deadness crept over you? Go as the impotent paralytic. Does dissipation claim you as its wretched and shattered victim? Go as a lunatic. Is there darkness all round you? Go like blind Bartimæus. And if you feel all foul with inward leprosy, go always as a leper, crying, as Isaiah did, "Unclean, unclean!"*

And do you think that He who was called the Friend of sinners will repudiate you? Or that He, whose feet the Magdalen washed with her tears and wiped with the hairs of her head, will spurn you from the footstool of His mercy? Was it not thought the disgrace of the bad Stuart king James II. that he admitted his nephew, the Duke

* I have seen a sentence to this effect in some Puritan divine.

of Monmouth, to his presence, and saw him grovel at his feet, and yet refused him the life for which he pleaded? When the young Bourbon prince, the Duc d'Enghien, doomed to death, asked Napoleon to see him, Napoleon refused, and when asked why he had refused, he said, "Had I seen him, I must have pardoned him; as I had determined not to pardon him, I would not see him." Hear what the unjust judge saith! And can you do Christ the monstrous injustice to imagine in Him the cruelty of bidding you to pray God for pardon, when He knew that the pardon was impossible, and would be refused?

My brethren, God only knows who is the worst sinner here; there may be many worst sinners here. In this vast mixed congregation there may be the thief, the drunkard, the harlot, the fornicator, the adulterer, the slanderer, or worse; there may be many a man or woman whose conscience, burning with guilty secrets, says to them, "You are falling headlong, headlong into destruction." Yet, let them come—let the worst come; and, oh! God has promised that they shall be forgiven, their leprosy cleansed, their soul born again like the soul of a little child! Those only cannot yet be heard who are defiant, willing, determined, high-handed sinners; who sin, and mean to go on sinning; and do not repent, and do not intend to repent; and

love the sin which is their curse better than God their Saviour. To those in this state of mind the prayer becomes absurd, nay blasphemous; for they are only mocking God by the pretence of asking forgiveness for sins for which they are not sorry, for which they do not repent, which they perfectly intend to go on committing. For such, while they are such, the prayer is no prayer, or just as absurd as if they were to pray that two and two might not make four. But I trust that there are very few, if any, so hardened, so wicked, such insolent and defiant rebels against the grace of God which calleth them to repentance. And to every penitent I say, Come boldly; come assuredly; come expecting to be heard; quite sure that you *will* be heard. Are we to be surprised that God keeps his word?

I stood amazed, and whispered "Can it be
 That He hath granted all the boon I sought?
 How wonderful that He for me hath wrought!
 How wonderful that He hath answered me!"
 Oh! faithless heart. He *said* that He would hear,
 And answer thy poor prayer; and He *hath* heard
 And proved His promise! Wherefore did'st thou fear?
 Why marvel that thy Lord hath kept His word?
 More wonderful if He should fail to bless
 Expectant faith and prayer with good success!

AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS
AGAINST US

'As we forgive them that trespass against us.'—

ST. MATTHEW vi. 12.

THE last time that my duties called me here, I spoke to you on "Forgive us our trespasses;" let us, this afternoon, consider very simply the conclusion of the clause. I have read it to you in the most familiar form; but if you would know with exact accuracy what our Lord said you must turn to the Revised Version. There you will read, in St. Matthew, "*And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors;*" and in St. Luke, "*And forgive us our sins; for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is indebted to us.*"

You will see that any difficulties the clause may have suggested to you are not lightened but rather pressed home by the more accurate renderings. They show even more distinctly that unforgiving is unforgiven, that our forgiveness of others is distinctly the condition of God's forgiveness of us. The words are only indirectly a prayer that we

may be helped to forgive; they are a plea, because we have forgiven; they are an appeal, "*Forgive us for we also forgive.*"

Now the more we study the Lord's Prayer, the more rich in instruction shall we find it. One point which is constantly overlooked is, that every one of the seven petitions of which it consists is not only a petition, but also involves a duty and a vow. Not one of them is an idle prayer; each requires an effort.

"*Our Father.*" Then we are Thy sons, and Thou lovest us, and wilt hear us.

"*Which art in heaven.*" And therefore our souls must be full of reverence and holy fear in coming before Thee.

"*Be Thy name made holy.*" Therefore it is the duty of our lives to hate whatsoever dishonours that holy name.

"*Thy kingdom come.*" Woe unto us then, if like idle, lazy, selfish drones we are doing nothing to advance that kingdom and to assail its foes.

"*Thy will be done.*" Therefore we are bound to strive more and more, all our lives long, to have no will but Thine.

"*As in heaven, so on earth.*" And therefore our service must be ceaseless, vivid, hearty, ungrudging as those of the spirits in heaven.

"*Give.*" For from Thee alone all good things come

“*Give us.*” For we pray not for our wretched selves only, but for all our brethren in the great family of man ;

“*Give us this day.*” For only to-day is ours ; to-morrow is Thine, and may be never ours, as yesterday is Thine, and is ours no longer ;

“*Give us this day our daily bread.*” Bread ; for that suffices, and in that is included all that is necessary for our bodies and our souls ; and, since we pray for it, it is the primitive duty of our lives diligently and honestly to work for it.

“*And forgive us our trespasses.*” It is our duty to strive against committing them ; but we are all steeped in sin and shame, and with Thee alone is the divine power, and the infinite compassion, which can forgive sins.

“*As we forgive them that trespass against us.*” Ah ! there the vow is not merely implied, as it is in each of the other seven petitions, but it is expressed ; and the mere fact that it *is* thus expressed shows alike how difficult, and how necessary it is. It points us to an antecedent condition ; as Shakespeare says :

We pray for mercy,
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render
The deeds of mercy.

Let the Lord's Prayer teach us, then, that by Christ's own lesson, the condition of all prayer is

action. Prayer, which we deem so easy, which we perform so perfunctorily, is, when it is real prayer, the passion of an effort, the wrestling of a life. Prayers which are not uttered from the heart are but forms and functions and idle breaths of articulated air. As our great Laureate, who lies in yonder grave, expressed it in his last poem :

To pray, to do—
 To pray, to do according to the prayer,
 Are both to worship Alla ; but the prayers
 Which have no successors in deed are faint
 And pale in Alla's eyes—fair mothers they,
 Dying in childbirth of dead sons.

But what do we mean by saying to God : “Forgive us, *as* we have forgiven” ; forgive us, “*for* we forgive ?”

i. Is it a self-righteous prayer ? Does it mean that we bring something with us to God which merits the forgiveness which we ask and so sorely need ? Nay, not so. We do not come to Him with the braggart vaunt of the Pharisee. We do not flaunt before Him our righteousness which is but as filthy rags. “Nothing in my hand I bring.” But we pledge ourselves to the duty which He requires of us. We confess, with our own lips, that the condition is essential, and that if we do not try to fulfil it, our prayer must be in vain.

ii. Still, how can we say “Forgive us *as* we forgive” ? Do we desire that *our* imperfect, grudging

forgiveness should be the model and measure of God's? Is this wretched puddle of our reluctant magnanimity to measure that infinite sea of God's compassion? Is the ungracious scantness with which we give up our paltry hundred pence to indicate the way in which He cancels and obliterates the colossal due of our ten thousand talents? Ah no! my friends, we fall into no such silly error. The "*as we forgive*" implies "not equality in the degree, but only conformity in the thing;" it asks forgiveness, not equally scanty in amount, not equally grudging in concession, but dimly analogous in kind, though immeasurably vaster and more blessed in degree.

iii. "Forgive us, *as we have forgiven*; forgive us *for we also forgive.*" Are we then to set up ourselves as an example to God? Do we bid Him to copy us, and not to be harder or worse than we are? Nay, that might be a quite impossible blasphemy; and yet, in the sense of a dumb blind helpless appeal, God does permit something like it. It is like the old epitaph:

Here lie I, David Elginbrod,
Have mercy on my sins, Lord God;
As I would do, were I Lord God,
And ye were David Elginbrod.

It is not blasphemy, it is a trembling, filial confidence. It is an appeal to God by that element of His own nature which He has implanted in us.

The wish that of the living whole
 No life may fail beyond the grave,
 Derives it not from what we have,
 The likest God within the soul ?

It is a cry from that which is most divine in man to that which is most divine in God. We, poor wretches, as we are taught by Thee, *can* forgive one another. If, then, "there be any such goodness in us, it is from Thee, and therefore is infinitely more in Thyself as the ocean of goodness." We cry as David does in the poem :

Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst Thou! So wilt Thou!

So shall crown Thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown,
 And Thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
 One spot for the creature to stand in.

Our forgiveness is at the best but a dew-drop; yet even a dew-drop may reflect the blue infinite heaven and the glory of the risen sun.

Now I said that this condition—that our forgiveness of our brother must coincide with our forgiveness by God our Father—was necessary. Is it not supremely necessary? Rightly do

The gods
 Avenge on stony hearts a fruitless prayer
 For pity.

Mercifully does Christ require this as a condition of our own forgiveness; for the fulfilment of this condition in all its breadth would extinguish envy,

hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and would change into blessedness the misery of the world. And see how much Christ makes of it! This was the only clause of the Lord's Prayer on which, in His Sermon on the Mount, He commented. He said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Christ's religion is immensely different from men's religionism. They insist, with arrogant exclusiveness, on organisations, forms, rites, theological shibboleths, and endless non-essential minutiae. Christ puts love in the forefront.

Read His Parable of the Unmerciful Servant; read His woes on the Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; and see what He thinks of burdensome exactions and arrogant exclusiveness. Read the Parable of the Prodigal Son, and see what He thinks of those who would scatter with thorns the path of the tempted, and glare on the fallen with eyes full of hell. He makes the duty of mercy more pressing even than that of prayer. "If thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar; first be reconciled to thy brother." Read His awful displeasure against those who treat their brethren with taunts,

and flouts, and gibes, and sneers, and insolent contempt, and think themselves fine and clever for doing it. The religionism of man often degenerates till it is half arrogant usurpation, and half paltry externalism; the religion of Christ is humility and love.

But this duty of forgiving love to our brethren is all the more necessary because it is so supremely difficult. It is difficult because it is entirely repugnant to the stubborn depravity of our fallen nature. What two things most absolutely stamp the natural man? Are they not egotism and pride? Egotism: I, I, I! They would fain have all things and all men revolve around themselves; "they would break up the universe to make themselves a more comfortable foot-stool." They do not mind earning their daily bread in ways which make others utterably miserable, or even drown them in destruction and perdition. And pride—it is most insolent in the meanest; but it abounds in all of us. Men loom immensely large before themselves. They think far more of their rights than of those of others; far more of their rights than of their duties. Exacting, we seize our fellow-servant roughly by the throat with our "Pay me that thou owest." Impatient, we flame into anger at the smallest provocation. Sullen, we brood over injuries with implacable indignation. Resentful of the slightest opposition,

The small violence done
 Rankles in him, and ruffles all his heart,
 As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long
 A little bitter pool about a stone
 On the bare coast.

Revengeful, we indulge in our coarse vulgar "I'll pay him out"; "I'll put a spoke in his wheel"; "He's not done with me;" "He'll find me even with him yet"; "I owe him two for that"; "He shan't insult me for nothing." All this, so far from being a thing to be admired, represents the vilest part of human nature. And yet there are men—men, too, who pose as Christians—who actually live in this sort of thing. Mere envy will do it. Has a man been successful? They feel injured by it.

And what with spites and what with fears
 They will not let a body be,
 It's always ringing in their ears,
 They call this man as good as me.

I have known a man, out of mere jealousy, never miss an opportunity for a quarter of a century of sneering at one or two trivial oversights of a rival. I have known a man who, conceiving himself to have received a small but well-merited rebuff, has set himself for years to be revenged. I have known a man nurse the tiny cockatrice-egg of unforgiveness till it has burst into the fiery serpent of crime. There are some unhappy men, says Lord

Macaulay, "constitutionally prone to the darker passions, to whom bitter words are as natural as snarling and biting to a ferocious dog; and to come into the world with this mental disease is a greater calamity than to be born blind or deaf." And yet men pride themselves on this disease, calling their brutality honesty and their spite frankness!

Alas! alas! we are here face to face with the deadliest phase of human nature, yet of which a public man at any rate sees the proofs every day. It is the work of the devil; for "to render good for evil is Godlike; to render evil for good is fiendlike." And yet "Man is to man the sorest surest ill." Not only does manhood abound in "the little hearts that know not how to forgive," but even in the little hearts that have in them no spark of fairness or of kindness; the little hearts that delight in the safe and secret infliction of pain, and if they can, of ruin, on those who have rebuked their vice or touched their vanity, or stirred their envy, but which would not, even if they could, repay their evil deeds.

And do not think that forgiveness is but a little thing. It is *not* easy to such as we are. The man who will frankly forgive his neighbour a wrong will *not* be the man who cruelly pains or wantonly injures him. Alas! even when we try to fulfil this duty, or think we do, we often deceive

ourselves. Often our forgiveness is only semblable. "I forgive you as a Christian," says Cedric in "Ivanhoe." "Which means," says the jester Wamba, "that he does not forgive her at all."

Forgive? How many will say forgive and find
A sort of absolution in the sound
To hate a little longer?

And often our forgiveness is only skin deep, as when we say: "I forgive what you have done, but I can never forget it."

And how often our forgiveness is merely contemptuous and disdainful; as when the tyrant Dionysius sent to Plato and asked him not to abuse him at Athens for the wrongs he had inflicted, and Plato haughtily answered that "He had other things to do than to think of Dionysius." And how often our forgiveness is only quantitative. We ask, "How often must I forgive?" We say, "I cannot possibly forgive such repeated offences." Ah! God's forgiveness is not like that. We must forgive daily, as He forgives us daily; not seven times, but seventy times seven. We need daily cleansing from daily defilement by the spirit of hatred, as from all our other sins of word and deed.

And how often we cannot forgive at all, as when Queen Elizabeth, if the tale be true, said to the Countess of Nottingham, who confessed that she had kept back the ring by which Essex pleaded

for forgiveness, "God may forgive you, but I cannot."

Forgiveness was his theme; and lo!
What words with eloquence aglow!
And yet, upon his homeward way
He met relentlessly that day
An ancient enemy who pled
Forgiveness for an ill long dead:
And with quick words with wrath aglow
He silenced his repentant foe.

Alas! all this will not do. Our forgiveness must be real; it must be *ex animo*; it must reserve no spite or grudge; it must utterly clear itself of all ill-will and desire of revenge. It must be like that related by the great novelist in "St. Ronan's Well," where Clara Mowbray, her life ruined and blighted, her very reason unhinged, is summoned to the dying bed of Hannah Irwin, who, never having been wronged, and always kindly treated by her, has blasted all her happiness by an undiscovered lie, but in the hour of death implores her forgiveness. "Hannah Irwin," said Clara, with her usual sweetness of tone, "my early friend, my unprovoked enemy, betake thee to Him who has pardon for us all, and betake thee with confidence, for I pardon you as freely as if you had never wronged me, as freely as I desire my own pardon. Farewell, farewell." The poor, wronged, human soul that by Christ's spirit can so forgive may indeed humbly

plead, "Forgive us our trespasses, for we also forgive."

There are two reasons why Christ, unlike human teachers, lays such tremendous, such primary, such all-but-exclusive stress on a spirit which has more to do with our salvation than if we performed whatever churchly ceremonies in modern times would most nearly correspond to building seven altars, and offering on every altar a bullock and a ram. He did so for *our own sakes*; He did so for the *sake of the world* He came to save.

He did so for our own sakes. As nothing diffuses in the heart a purer sweetness than to forgive, so no pool of Marah water is deeper, more bitter, more desolating than a spite, or grudge, or implacable hatred, or unforgiven wrong. It poisons the whole heart. I know how bitter a man must feel it to receive wrongs at the hands of others which might fairly be regarded as intolerable; to be thwarted, to be secretly undermined, to be basely, and systematically, and for years together misrepresented, to be secretly stabbed in the back by poisoned daggers and unseen hands, to receive nothing but unkindness after a life which has striven habitually to do kind deeds. Yet, even under these circumstances, and they are by no means uncommon, the duty of magnanimity, of returning good for evil, of ungrudging forgiveness, is blessedly inexorable.

We shall not know the infinite sweetness of finding Christ until we have learnt from Him the Christlike spirit. If there be bliss, if there be peace on earth, it is when we rise above earth's sulphurous fogs and chilling mists to the sunlit hills of the charity which suffereth long, and is kind, and is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil. When we live in the spirit of St. Paul's injunction, "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, as God also in Christ forgave you"; when we remember that, whatever others say, Christ taught, "I say unto you love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you"; then, and not till then, shall we have entered that heaven which only seems so far away because so few of us will enter its open door.

And Christ dwelt on the necessity of the spirit of love, not for our sakes only, but for the sake of the world. For there is nothing which would so much alleviate the throbbing pang of the world's deadly hurt as the spirit of love. And this prayer pledges us to nothing less. For if it inculcates forgiveness of injuries, how does it brand that needless, that wanton, that deadly, that incessant infliction of injuries of which the world is full! How can any man pray this prayer who, all his life long, has the poison of asps under his lips?—who lives by, and

battens on, and delights in his own envy, spite, and malice?—who “feeds fat” his hatred with wrongs done to his neighbour—often his innocent and unoffending neighbour—by word and by deed? Oh! that we could turn the eyes of many men upon themselves, and let them see how utterly base their lives are. They live by inflicting injury. They live by giving pain. How can they pray “forgive as we forgive”? Ah! this prayer requires nothing less than that we should walk before God with a perfect heart. For this prayer pledges us to repudiate all murder, anger, adultery, theft, slander, and whatever other evil to our neighbour there may be.

Take two last remarks—one of warning, one of consolation.

The warning is, that if we do not try to act up to this prayer, in uttering it we fatally condemn ourselves. If we do not forgive, we actually offer the horrible prayer that we may not be forgiven. For, as Luther says, “When thou sayest ‘I will not forgive,’ and standest before God with thy precious paternoster, and mumblest with thy mouth ‘Forgive us our deb’ts as we forgive our debtors,’ what is that but saying ‘I do not forgive him, and so do not Thou forgive me? Thou hast told me to forgive, and rather than obey I will renounce Thee, and Thy heaven, and all, and be the devil’s for evermore.’”

But, lastly, is there not supreme consolation in this, that, if we love, we shall be loved? that if we forgive, we shall be forgiven? "If we forgive our brethren from our hearts, we may be assured that God will forgive us." It pleases Him "to accept our stubble for His wheat." We cannot lift holy hands unless we do so without wrath and dissension. But if we do this, we are qualified for mercy, and shall obtain it from God. His heart is not harder than ours. If we love our brethren, "he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." If His grace can make *our* hard hearts so soft, what may we not hope of Him who is all compassion?

My friends, if you will but try to translate these thoughts into action, you will cease to think them commonplace. They will become precious; they will become divine. Take them home with you. Have you a grudge against any one? drive the base thing with knotted scourges out of the temple of your heart: have you an enemy? forgive him before this sun sets. If your life is constantly causing unhappiness, and temptation, and humiliation to your brother men, instead of making them stronger and happier, oh, repent and amend that life, for it is not life, but clammy death. Then will this clause of the Lord's Prayer gleam out for you like the mystic light on Aaron's breast, "ardent with gems

oracular." Then will you be happy as the sunny and loving heart always is, as the bitter and selfish heart never can be. Then shall ye be true children of your Father which is in heaven, "for He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and on the unjust."

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

“And lead us not into temptation.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 13.

WE have seen that, of the seven petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the three first refer to the Holiness, the Kingdom, the Will of God; the four next to the Needs, the Sins, the Temptations, the Perils of Men.

Of these petitions, one only is at all for temporal necessities. The others all bear upon our soul's welfare. We pray for sustenance in the present, for forgiveness in the past; but forgiveness in the past would be useless unless God gave us strength for the future also. The sequel to “Thy sins be forgiven thee” is “Go, and sin no more.” Therefore—seeing that while life lasts temptation lasts, and with temptation the possibilities of moral ruin, and in that warfare there is no discharge—we daily pray “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

Let us first explain this petition, *Lead us not into temptation*, and then apply it by trying to under-

stand (1) the sources; (2) the methods; and (3) the way to escape temptation. We must do it as briefly and simply as we can, for the subject is very large.

For "*Lead* us not," the Revised Version has the more accurate rendering, "*Bring* us not." But does God ever bring us into temptation? Does not St. James write, "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God,' for God is untempted of evils, neither tempteth He any man"?

The explanation is very simple. It lies in the two senses of the word "temptation." It means "trial," the conditions meant to test our faithfulness; and it means actual incitement, seduction, inducement, allurements in the direction of wrong-doing. Now, in the first sense, God does tempt us; He tries us as gold in the fire is tried. In this sense He tempts us because He has placed us in a world wherein we are of necessity surrounded by evil influences, and because He has endowed us with a nature which, whatever it may once have been, is now, at any rate, weakened and corrupt, and prone to sin. But God only brings us into temptation because He can bring us safely out. God never tries to make us do wrong. On the contrary, He brings to bear every gracious influence, human and divine, to keep us untempted by wrong.

Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round !
 Parents first season us ; then schoolmasters
 Deliver us to laws ; they send us bound
 To rules of reason, holy messengers,
 Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
 Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
 Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
 Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
 Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
 The sound of glory ringing in our ears,
 Without our shame, within our consciences,
 Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears :—

all these powers does God bring to bear upon us as
 so many dissuasives, bulwarks, warnings against sin.
 If we sin in spite of them, it is only, alas ! because,
 in the fatal force and fascination of evil,

All these fences, and their whole array,
 One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.

Let no man, then, blasphemously murmur against
 God, Why hast Thou made me thus ? He has made
 us thus for the highest good and blessing of our race.
 Man achieves his utmost nobleness by victory over
 temptation. Through temptation he is sanctified.
 Temptation is God's winnowing fan. If there were
 no temptation to sin, there would be no glory of
 righteousness. Were virtue a thing compulsory and
 inevitable in us, then virtue itself would be valueless.
 And so St. James says, "Brethren, count it all joy
 when ye fall into divers temptations." Why does
 God in this sense tempt us ? It is of His love ; it is

for our good. Why do *you* send—why does the most loving and tender mother send—her young son to a public school? We parents know perfectly well that at school our sons will meet with many and serious temptations; temptations by which, if they yield, they will be terribly, perhaps even fatally, injured. Should we not think it monstrous if a son, whom we tried with all our might to train in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, were to turn round upon us and say, “Why did you send me to a public school?” Would not the answer be, “My son, I sent you to school because I knew it to be best for you.” You cannot escape temptation anywhere; not even in a cloister or a cave. The innocence of mere ignorance is impossible, and would be but a poor thing at the best.

God never meant us to be, and has made it impossible that we should be, artificially screened from temptation; He meant that we should face and overcome it. Temptation is not sin.

'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
Another thing to fall.

Temptation resisted is virtue; it is victory; it is a spring of new power, as the Indian warrior believes that the strength of his slain enemy passes into his own arm. No power in heaven or on earth, or under the earth, can make us sin. If we sin, we do so of our own free will. “The elder,” says Luther, “said

to a youth who complained that he was assailed by evil thoughts, 'My son, thou canst not prevent the birds of the air from flying over thy head, but thou canst prevent them from building their nests in thy hair.'" The youth in the great tragedy says, "What should I do? I confess it is my shame, but it is not in my virtue to amend it." What is Iago's answer to his weak complaint? "Virtue? a fig! 'Tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles and sow herbs, set hyssop and weed up thyme, have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and baseness of our nature would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions. But we have reason to rule our raging natures, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts."

And, happily, we have something more divine than reason to control us. We have conscience, the voice of God, to warn us; we have the invisible grace of God to strengthen us; we have the restraining spirit of God to hold us fast. If we fall, we fall by our own folly, our own weakness, our own guilt.

God, then, *tries* us, but He does not tempt, and our prayer is that we may not turn *His* trials into *Satan's*

allurements: His fire, which purges, into Satan's, which consumes.

Let us next see whence comes temptation. It has not one source, but three.

i. It comes from that terrible power of external evil which we call the devil. "Be sober, be vigilant," says St. Peter, "because your adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour." All temptations may come from him, but especially those universal ones of pride, selfishness, passion, hatred, lies, unbelief, irreverence, self-will, which constitute his horribly perverted nature.

ii. And temptation comes from the world, its nearness, its menacing noise, the fear which it inspires, the spell which it exercises, its splendid illusiveness, the lust of the eyes, the braggart vaunt of life.

iii. And it comes most often of all from the flesh. "Every man," says St. James, "is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed." This is the force which temptation derives from our corrupt nature, with the fatal bias of its long heredities of evil. And this infection of nature, as our Article says, doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerate, whereby the lust of the flesh, called in Greek *φρόνημα σαρκός*—*i. e.*, concupiscence, sensuality, the affection, the desire of the flesh—is not subject to the law of God.

Observe, then, the manifoldness and immensity of

the perils in which we are placed! We are walking through a wilderness wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. We find *laqueos ubique*—snares and gins and traps on every side. We are never alone, never without an enemy, for we carry with us everywhere ourselves. Everywhere, even to the monkish cloister, even to the secret chamber, even to the desert island, we carry our own lusts, and passions, and desires, and fatal propensities, and deadly besetting habits, and the great deep of our own evil and deceitful hearts, so that the bad man is forced to say of himself:

Which way I fly is hell, myself am hell;
 And in the lowest deep a lower deep
 Still yawning to devour me opens wide,
 To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven!

and even the good man must plead to God with all his might:

God harden me against myself,
 This traitor with pathetic voice
 Which craves for ease, and rest, and joys;
 Myself arch-traitor to myself,
 My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
 My clog whatever road I go.

But Satan is not content even with the multitudinous temptations which come to us naturally from the desires of the flesh and of the mind. He never lets us alone except when his work is so effectually

done that he thinks he can safely leave us to be our own destroyers. He will try us in all ways, now one, now another. If he cannot storm the portcullis he will sneak in by the unguarded wicket-gate. He will not cease tempting us till he has found out the secret of where we are weakest, and has shot his last fiery dart. It does not in the least matter to him in what way we fall, be it by fleshly indulgence, or worldly ambition, or spiritual pride; enough for him if we do but fall. How much, then, does our whole nature need to be strengthened—how unceasingly should our whole life be under holy guard!

These, then, being the sources of temptation, how do they approach us? How do they act upon us? They come in two ways: by stealthy witchery or in sudden furious assaults.

i. The type of the first is the adder. It comes noiselessly, gradually, insidiously, with the creeping glide, with the almost imperceptible motion of a venomous thing, undulating through life's dry and fallen leaves, till, when it is quite close to us, and can catch us at unawares, it darts out at us its forked and flickering tongue. This represents the bewitchment, the glamour, the slow depraving fascination of sin.

ii. The type of the second is the wild beast. Sometimes when we fancy ourselves most secure the temptation to some deadly sin crashes out suddenly

upon us like a panther from its lair, with flaming eyes and lashing spring and thick carnivorous roar. In one unexpected moment we find ourselves engaged in fiercest conflict with this temptation which has leapt upon us, "terrible and with tiger's leaps." Woe unto us if it find us unprepared to resist! Woe unto us if the "tempting opportunity" has confronted with fatal suddenness "the susceptible disposition"! This represents the violence, the fury, the raging assault of sin.

Surely, then, my friends, you will see the awful necessity for this daily prayer, "Lead us not into temptation"; the awful significance of our Saviour's warning, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." And blessed are we if we feel, all our lives long, that this petition, like each of the others, involves a vow and an effort. It pledges us in the strongest way, if we would not make our prayer an insult and a blasphemy, to shun temptation by every means in our power. We cannot avoid the testing trial. In that sense temptation comes from God, and if it have only come to us in the path of duty, then we may fearlessly claim the promise, "He shall give His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways": and then, by our victory, alike over creeping and crashing assault, we shall fulfil Christ's prophecy, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and the adder; the young

lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under thy feet."

But God promises no such victory if we be careless, and prayerless, and defiant, and full-fed. Why do men fall so fearfully? Why are they so horribly ruined, so fearfully beguiled? The explanation is not that God tries, not even that Satan tempts, but that men themselves purposely linger in the neighbourhood of temptation, wilfully dally and tamper with it. The warning against this begins with the very dawn of our race. Why did Eve eat the forbidden fruit? Because she lingered near the forbidden tree, and gazed on it, and listened to the seductive whisper, till the look became the thought, and the thought the desire, and the desire the purpose, and the purpose the deadly act. Would Achan have become a thief of the accursed thing if he had not gloated on the ingot of gold and the Babylonish garment? Would David have become an adulterer, and a murderer, and a haunted and ruined man, if, on that night of shame, he had turned elsewhere his unholy gaze?

Some, it has been said, "enter into temptation presumptuously, to show their power; some curiously, to taste the allurements; some carelessly, taking no heed; some imitatively, following where others go; some pharisaically, pretending to glorify God by showing what His grace can do." But, alas! "there

is no necessary connection between entering into temptation and coming out of it." "Impulses easy to subdue," says Rousseau, "drag us along without resistance. We yield to slight temptations, of which we despise the danger. Insensibly we find ourselves in perilous positions, from which we can no longer deliver ourselves without heroic efforts which terrify us; and at last we fall into the abyss, saying to God, 'Why hast Thou made me so feeble?' But, in spite of ourselves. He answers to our consciences, 'I made thee too weak to rise (by thine own power) out of the gulf, because I made thee strong enough never to fall therein.'"

My friends, and, above all, you who are young, be sure of this: he who tampers with temptation is lost. There is but one rule about temptation; namely,

Think it as a serpent's egg,
Which, hatched, would, as his kind, grow mischievous,
And kill it in the shell.

It is *fugiendo pugnare*. Like the Parthian warriors, we must overcome by flight. We must shun, not only sin, but every occasion, every incitement, every alluring seduction, every inward imagination by which Satan will strive to render sin attractive; nay, we must, to our best power, fly every vicinage and approach to sin, otherwise Satan, with maddening insistence, will whisper, "Yea, hath God said?" and

“Ye shall not surely die,” and “Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil,” and

Be mine, and sin's, for one short hour, and then
Be all thy life the happiest man of men.

And he knows that if he can but once make us have a part in him there will be terrible odds that he will clutch us tight and long, and drag us down to utter perdition. But God's rule—the only safe rule about temptation—is “Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it and pass away.” It is “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look right before thee.” It is “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.” It is “Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned?” It is “See that ye walk circumspectly—ἀκριβῶς—accurately, warily, carefully; not as fools, but as wise, buying up the opportunity, because the days are evil.”

But, oh, my friends! if it be folly and weakness and peril not to give temptation as wide a berth as possible, not to get out of the way of it, not to exorcise by holy thoughts the base, perverted curiosity about it; and if the prayer, “Lead us not into temptation,” pledges us to this; how does that prayer brand the guilt, the depravity, the insanity, of those who seek temptation? who revel in temp-

tation? who roll it as a sweet morsel under the tongue? who go out of their way to provide, to create, to intensify, temptations for themselves? If the righteous scarcely be saved—if they barely escape the wiles of the wicked one who strive and pray—with what fierce teeth shall *they* be mangled, with what envenomed claws shall they be rent, who deliberately feed the furious wild beasts of their own most animal passions; who, by their own acts, add fuel to those devouring flames?

Do not men purposely go among the bad companions whose mutual wickedness makes sin grow hotter and more glaring by intolerable reflexions? Does the miserable drunkard never take into his hands the intoxicating cup, which he knows he will not leave off drinking till it has brought his wretchedness to rags and ruin? Does the young man never begin to bet and gamble, and think that he can stop as soon as he likes? Does the unclean liver never inflame and pander to his own lowest lusts by the voluntary dwelling on foul imaginations, and by the literature of pollution, and the unclean imagery which is horrible depravement and spiritual death? Alas, alas! how can these not fall? They must fall; they must be ruined! They seek their own degradation and destruction. They are like the poor moths that rush to scorch themselves to death. They need no devil to tempt. They are

devils to themselves. Their own worst devils, they light the flames of their own self-consuming hells. Can these wilful and flagrant tempters of themselves pray, "Lead us not into temptation"? "Son of Man, these men have set the stumbling-block of their iniquity before their face; shall I at all be inquired of by them?" Must not their prayer rather be that, by whatever agonies, through whatever terrible retributions, God would pluck them, as brands half-consumed, out of the burning; rend them from the devil's grasp as the shepherd tears out of the mouth of the lion two legs and the piece of an ear?

One last word. We pray, "Lead us not into temptation," because there is an escape for every one of us. Christ overcame for us the threefold sources of temptation in their subtlest and most virulent form, to show us that we can, and how we can, conquer. He conquered the devil, because never, even in thought, had He suffered the spirit of evil to enter the precincts of His soul, so that He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." He conquered the appetites of the body by feeding on the bread of heaven, which is to do the will of God. He conquered the allurements of the world by the constant sense of the divine, the eternal life, which prevents a soul from imbruting itself in the unlawful impulses of

that lower life which we share with the beasts that perish. He looked to His Father in heaven. He seized the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. And—having been tempted like as we are, though without sin—the Lord knoweth how to deliver them that are godly out of temptation. My friends, we are in danger; always in danger. Who can say how frightful at this very moment may be the peril of some soul among you? Who can tell whether these very words of mine may not be God's appointed means to pluck you from the very edge of the horrible precipice? Oh, awake to your danger! Awake, arise, or be for ever fallen!

And of this be we all sure, that if we do not watch and pray, none of us is safe at any time, none of us is safe from anything. Yet, if you be faithful, be not afraid. We may feel a high, unflinching courage, if we say with Jehoshaphat, "We have no might against this great host that cometh against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

There never has any temptation overtaken us but such as is human, as is common to man, as may be overcome by man. No irresistible temptations ever will assail us. If we fall, we fall of our own depraved choice; for with every temptation God also makes—not "*a way*," as the Authorised Version has it—but "*the way* to escape, that we may be able to

bear it." And one way of escape is the daily heart-felt utterance of this prayer, and the daily vow which this prayer implies, and the daily effort to avoid and to resist with all our might the temptations against which we pray.

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL

I.

‘But deliver us from evil.’—ST. LUKE xi. 14.

SOME have regarded this petition as part of the last; as nothing but a definition of what we mean by “Lead us not into temptation.” This, however, is a mistake. The prayer that we may not be brought into overwhelming temptation, is one thing; the prayer that God would deliver us from evil, would “keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death,” is quite another. The number seven was sacred, and this, the separate, seventh petition in the Lord’s Prayer, comprehensively sums up all the rest. “Thus praying we seek the final deliverance of the Church from whatever pollutes, of the world from whatever injures it, of our souls and bodies from everything which is their curse and destruction.” Thus viewed this last petition is the climax of the whole prayer. It is the chief, permanent, all-comprehensive longing of the believer

“Whatever tribulation he suffers,” says St. Augustine, “for this deliverance he groans; in hope of this he weeps; from this he begins; with this perseveres; uttering this he completes his prayer.”

It is the universal cry of the human heart. When we pray “*Lead us not into temptation,*” we pray against ourselves; our own soft treacheries and base rebellions. When we pray “*Deliver us from evil*” we pray against everything which ruins and makes us wretched; against the slavery of sin; against all the fury, cunning, and malignity of the devil or of man; against:

Wasted lands,
 Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps
 and fiery sands,
 Clanging fights and flaming towns, and sinking ships.

It is against all the trouble, and pain, and confusion, worse than death, which sin has brought into the world we should uplift our souls in prayer.

The existence of evil in the world is an insoluble mystery. It is one of the secret things of God. To account for it absolutely surpasses our finite capacities. We never shall know in this life why evil exists. In vain have philosophers brooded over it; saints have wept and prayed over it in vain. It surrounds us like a wall of impenetrable darkness, on which the lifted torch of the poet and the odorous lamp of the sage have shed no gleam. Rage against

it has driven some men into atheism ; some into pessimism ; some into the belief in an evil as well as a good God ; some into desperation, or the yet worse wretchedness of unclean living. Had it been possible to lift but one corner of this curtain, opaque as midnight, or to lighten this crushing burden of mystery, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has done *all* for us, would have done this for us. But it could not be. Something in the nature of things, something in the inexorable decrees of eternal destiny, rendered it impossible. " Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself." If we are wise, we shall leave the mystery of the existence of evil in the hands of that inscrutable God. It is as high as heaven—what canst thou do ? Deeper than hell—what canst thou know ? All things end in a mystery, and all things practically end in this mystery—Why does evil exist ?

But however useless may be every attempt to throw the faintest light on the question why God, who is almighty and all-merciful, permits the existence of evil, the fact that He *does* so—the fact that evil *is*—is a tremendous reality. It is idle to brood on the mystery, but it is sheer madness to ignore it. There it is ; we meet it every day of our lives ; it is all around us. " Everything has a crack in it " ; " something is wrong, there needeth a change."

We look back at the primæval world, before man was. Those fearfully great lizards, those dragons of

the prime—what is the meaning of their lethal armour, their jagged teeth, their rending talons, their heavy brutal jaws? We look at savage man in his filthy, squalid, and sanguinary brutalism; we look at the deformed skulls and coarse flint implements of cannibal tribes, which are the earliest relics of the human race. We read the Bible story how Paradise was lost, and the fiery sword of the Cherubim gleamed before its undiscoverable door; how the first man and woman were the first tempter and transgressor; how the first human child grew up to be a branded murderer, and the second child his murdered victim. We read how the chosen people became the slayer of its prophets, and how its apostate religionism crucified its Lord. We turn to the book of secular history, and whose hand shall whiten those crimson pages glued together with the blood of myriads of battles, soaked through and through with the putrid staining of unnumbered crimes? We look at the lives of the great and good, and see in them a long martyrology at the hands of the base and vile. We see continually:

A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
An ever-moaning battle in the mist,
World-war of dying flesh against the life,
The lowest having power upon the highest,
And the high purpose broken by the worm.

We look into our own hearts, and know their plague

and darkness. We walk in the streets, and see thousands of faces lettered with the hieroglyphics of sorrow, or stamped with the brand of shame. We take up the newspaper of yesterday, and read of charity denounced by sneering cynicism, while men and women are slowly starving to death amid the superfluities of boundless luxury; of little children maimed, tortured, beaten, starved from day to day so slowly that none call it murder; of one English city in which twenty-four deaths were recorded on Christmas morning—six children suffocated; and nearly every death due to the foul and execrable curse of drink. We take up the journal of to-day, and read how a man and wife drink together all Christmas-eve, and fight and scuffle all night, and in the morning the wretched drunken woman is found lying kicked to death by her brutal drunken husband, a blood-stained hatchet lying on the floor, and his heavy boots soaked with blood. And in the same paper we read how the devilish dastardy of the Irish felon once more shatters buildings with dynamite, and blows into atoms the bodies of his innocent victims. And these things, or things worse than these, are going on daily in Christian lands, though well-nigh nineteen hundred years have sped since heaven disclosed its dazzling minstrelsies at that first Christmastide to the soft silence of the listening night. Ah, God!

Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer cloud,
And not provoke our wonder?

We are living in a world of evil. From the moon which lights our skies, from stars burnt up and shattered in the boundless depths, from the earth wrinkled with graves, from the heart sick with cares, from nations poisoned with drink and disgraced by crime, from "insane religion, degraded art, merciless war, detestable pleasure, and vain or vile hope;" from the long records of humanity, so loud with wailing, so dim with tears, so red with blood, the truth is pitilessly forced upon us that if good is, evil also is—evil terrible and not to be disguised. And even if we turn from man to inanimate nature, there, too, as our greatest writer has said, "The blasted trunk, the barren rock, the moaning of the bleak winds, the roar of the black, perilous, merciless whirlpools of the mountain streams, the continual fading of all beauty into darkness, and of all life into dust," teach us that Gerizim and Ebal, light and darkness, life and death, heaven and hell, divide the present existence of man even if, by God's power, the deadliest elements of evil shall be eliminated from his eternity.

Realise the fact; shock your fastidiousness with it; startle your sensual and selfish torpor with it; let it scare the namby-pamby nullities of your

religious conventionality; let your "rustling masquerade of life" be brushed by these hard realities of death; let the spectres of all this horrible phantasmagoria look in, hollow-eyed, upon your callous indifference or dainty sympathies. Do you fancy that you can escape evil by ignoring it? Think you to get beyond its reach by lading yourself with the thick clay of mammon, or steeping your dead souls in sensualism? Do you imagine that, in the midst of it all, God meant men to be apathetic as the beasts that perish, so long as there is carrion enough to feed their vulture appetites? Life is a base, a brutal, a carnal dream to all whose deeds are swelling the sum of this evil; to all whose hearts are not troubled by it; to all who are not doing their utmost to fight against its causes; to all who do not cry to God with something of heartfelt passion, "That it may please Thee to have mercy upon all men."

Our Father, deliver us from evil. What I mainly want, then, is to arouse you from the life of sin, from the life of selfishness, from the torpor of dead consciences, from the lulling mummery of sham religiosity, to some sense of the fact that while we live we are, every soul of us, in peril from the existence and the assaults of evil.

How does Scripture describe our life? In its brevity, as the withering grass, as the fading flower,

as a mist, a vapour, a dream when one awaketh ; as the shadow of a bird's wing in the summer noon ; as the flight of an arrow through the air ; as the pathway of a boat's keel in the glassy wave :—but in its need for energy and watchfulness, in its desperate danger for all who live with the ungirded loins and the unburning lamp, as a warfare in which there is no discharge, a wrestling, not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers ; as the sleepless watch of a sentinel in a beleaguered fortress ; as the toil of a husbandman ; as the agonising of an athlete ; as a brief journey through a great and terrible wilderness, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. It may be that some have come here to-day utterly blind to all spiritual peril, utterly content with their worthlessness ; living lives of cruel indifference to the curse they inflict on others by their lust or by their lies :—and God may be letting them alone.

But if of all those now present any young man is here to-day who is a fornicator or a profane person, as Esau, who sold his birthright, what darkened understanding, what corroded conscience, what penal blindness scattered over forbidden lusts, what bewitchment of the devil, has made him so insensate a fool as to think that he alone of all mankind is to be an exception to the absolutely exceptionless experience of the world, which is that

physical evil, in all its terrible varieties, has been inextricably linked to moral evil; that he who sows the wind shall reap the whirlwind; that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished; that neither he nor any wilful sinner shall escape the fearful *lex talionis* of God's offended law, "Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe"? "You feel none of all this; you fear none of all this," you insolently reply. No! but how shall it be when the evil you have committed holds you in its merciless clutch? when the pleasure-boat of your life, which now seems to glide so smoothly between bright shores, is in the grasp of the rapids and hurried towards the horrible cataract? How shall it be when the chance spark of your sin has wrapped in conflagration the whole horizon of your life, and you can scarcely be saved from that billowing ring of flame, whose flakes, it may be, have begun already to fall thick upon your wasted years?

"*Our Father, deliver us from evil.*" I shall have more to say to you on this petition hereafter, but now I would impress on every one of you, be he smooth Pharisee or be he guilty publican, the grim reality of our personal peril from this universal evil against which we pray. And in this respect it makes no difference whether we pray "Deliver us

from evil," or, as it is rendered in the Revised Version, "Deliver us from the Evil One." It would be unfit to enter here into the uncertain question which is the right rendering. Suffice it that the Greek may mean either, and that it is not from the Greek words that we can decide the question; but in either case the one rendering involves the other.

Deliver us from the Evil One.

Has it ever occurred to you to think in what lurid gleams Scripture sets forth to us the work of that living malignity? Is there nothing to alarm us, even in his names? He is *Satan*, the Enemy, the Adversary, the only enemy whom we need to fear. He is the *Tempter*, seducing, alluring, deceiving, undermining, entrapping, terrifying us into sin. Then, from the smiling, soft-voiced tempter, he springs at once into the devilish *Accuser*, branding, blackening, blasting us with the very sins into which he led us. Then he becomes *Apollyon*, the Destroyer, "straddling quite over the whole breadth of our path in life," scorching us with his envenomed breath, heaping upon us his fiery darts, suffocating us under his dragon's wings. A liar, and the father of it; a murderer from the beginning; full of subtle wiles and infinite devices; sowing tares in our hearts; dangling before us his gilded lures, and when his hook has lacerated us, dragging us out to gasp and die upon the shore;

creeping to us like a poisonous serpent, with noiseless glide through the fallen leaves of our lost innocence, or bounding out in one crashing leap upon us with flaming eyes, like a wild beast out of the tangled thicket of our follies. So he is described to us—never letting us alone, trying us at every point, persistently lying in wait at the weakest, sifting us with every temptation in turn, and at last fatally aware which is most certain to succeed.

O ye sons of men, O ye women that are at ease, and ye careless daughters, is this an enemy that you—you so weak and frail, so prone to guilt, and already, it may be, tied and bound by the chain of your evil habits—can afford to despise? He is well content that you should do so, for your contempt is his victory; but oh! awake in time to the sense of this your peril, and cry with all your hearts to Him who alone can save you.

Deliver us from the Evil One. Otherwise it has been truly said, "We are never safe; the very stubble of our old sins may run into our eyes and blind us; the dregs of them may choke us; the ashes of them may kindle again and consume us. Therefore do we always need God's present help, so that the Prince of this world may be judged in us also, even as He was judged by our Lord."

But perhaps you are a fine young man, or a fine young lady, who consider yourself far too philo-

sophical to believe in the existence of the Evil Spirit. You may have been taught to say by the fine cynics and Agnostics of the world that the existence of the devil is a belief only of the vulgar; a piece of late Hebrew mythology, absurd and impossible, borrowed by the Jews from the Babylonians during their exile. Very well, if it is so, so be it. I shall not stop to argue that matter with you. Satan is very glad that you should disbelieve in him. There is nothing which pleases him better than to fool you to the top of your bent by shamming dead;—unless it be to pass himself off as an Angel of Light, in the guise of numbing forms and narcotic dogmas.

Whether evil be a *thing* in the abstract, or a *person* in the concrete, evil *is*; and it is infinitely necessary that we should cry daily with all our hearts “Deliver us from the Evil,” lest we should be overthrown and destroyed by it. The root of all evil, and the source of all evil, and that which transforms itself for us into every issue and manifestation of evil, is *sin*. It is against sin, against the subtlety of sin, against the glamour of sin, against the deceitfulness, against the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that I would aim every word of warning which I have uttered in your ears this day. I entreat you to take this warning to yourselves.

What the deliverance is, whence it comes, how

it is effected, we must consider hereafter. Only now let me ask, Do you indeed desire that ere this dawning year has closed it should find you better, purer, holier?

Here in the body pent
Afar from Him I roam ;
Yet nightly pitch my moving tent
A day's march nearer home.

On this day you are far nearer—shall I call it home or doom?—than you were on this day last year. Perhaps on New Year's Day, 1894, you will not be sitting in this Abbey, but mouldering in your grave. Perhaps by that time “mercy will have played her part, and vengeance have leaped upon the stage,” and the short comedy shall have been followed by a long and infinite tragedy. But how if this day next year should find you living indeed, but living in a deeper death; not a year's march nearer home, but a year's march lost more hopelessly in the trackless desert?

Ah! the one evil, the master-evil, the sole evil which our own perverted will can render irremediable, is the evil of the guilt of our own hearts. Are you conscious of any one sin, any one sinful habit, which you will not give up? Has avarice, or lust, or malice, or worldliness, got firm possession of you? Ah! then you are as yet in the power of evil and of the Evil One.

How can you be delivered? God has provided, God has promised us deliverance. But how shall it become *our* deliverance? How habitually do we ignore the lesson which the Church means to inculcate by calling our attention always on the first day of the year to Christ's circumcision! Did she not mean thereby to teach us that the way of deliverance from our own evil is by pain, by effort, by self-repression, by the circumcision of our heart and all our members? You will never be delivered from evil by somnolence and self-indulgence.

Not on flowery beds, nor under shade
Of canopy reposing, Heaven is won.

The only way to gain that deliverance is to strive against all that is wicked in ourselves and others, and to pray with all our hearts, "Our Father, deliver us from evil, deliver us from the Evil One." Awake, then, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead. How long will you fatally procrastinate? To-day is yours; you know not whether to-morrow will be. Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear God's voice, harden not your hearts

II.

“But deliver us from evil.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 13.

MY last sermon was devoted to the endeavour to bring home to every soul among us the reality and awfulness of the evil which is in the world; and the attitude of burning antagonism towards it, defiance of its menaces, scorn of its seductions, which it ought to be the object of our lives to assume. I desire, this afternoon, to join with you in trying to understand more specifically what our Lord meant by “the evil” from which, in this petition, we pray to be delivered, and what light His prayer throws upon it.

Evils—things to which we all rightly give that name—abound on every side. There is no single life of man, from that of the king upon his throne to that of the beggar on the dunghill, which is not touched by them. Half the practical philosophy of man has been directed to the question how we should regard, how we should deal with them.

The Epicureans, identifying evil with discomfort, regarded the culture of personal pleasure and the avoidance of personal pain as the end of life. They thus committed the fatal errors of making self-interest the basis of right and wrong, and of practically leaving man as much exposed to calamities as ever, but without the divine heroism which can face and conquer them. For the man who tries to play hide-and-seek with things disagreeable does not thereby escape them. If he shirks his duties because they seem painful, he gets the pain all the same with no support from duty—"bitter herbs and no bread with them." The other great sect of heathen philosophers, the Stoics, fell into an opposite error, though a much nobler one. They taught rightly that obedience to the moral law is the end of life; and that, in comparison with this, all else is insignificant. But, pushing this view to extremes, they tried to persuade themselves that pain is no evil, and earthly happiness is no good. Their protest against the moral disorder and wickedness of the world was heroic, but it was inefficient. It could inspire fortitude, but not joy; courage, but not hope; resignation, but not peace. To make believe that pain and want and sickness are not evils was to put too great a strain on human nature. Such a belief could only be arrived at by crushing out some of man's sweetest

emotions, and tearing away some of his finest instincts.

Christianity fell into neither error. It recognised evil things as evil; it laid no check on the natural movements of human feeling. Christ wept aloud over fallen Jerusalem; He shed silent tears by the grave of Lazarus; He sighed deeply when He witnessed the disabilities of the afflicted; He groaned with indignation for the hardness of men's hearts. And He taught us a more excellent way. It was to connect all real evil with sin and wickedness, and to regard all pain and sorrow as pain indeed and sorrow, but as so incommensurate with wrongdoing as to become nothing in comparison with it.

“There are so many things wrong and difficult in the world,” says the noble-hearted lady to her boy, in a great work of fiction, “that no man can be great—he can hardly keep himself from wickedness—unless he gives up thinking much about pleasures and rewards, and gets strength to endure what is hard and painful. And so, my Lillo, if you mean to act nobly, and seek to know the best things God has put within reach of men, you must learn to fix your mind on that end, and not on what will happen to you because of it. And, remember, if you were to choose something lower, and make it the rule of your life to seek your own pleasure and escape from what is disagreeable, calamity

might come just the same, and it would be calamity falling on a base mind, which is the one form of sorrow that has no balm in it, and that may well make a man say, 'It would have been better for me if I had never been born.'

Myriads of human beings have lived to say that, and many have even lived to curse the day of their birth, when the shattered barque of their lives has been flung by the tempests of agony or misfortune into that narrow place where two seas meet—where the sea of calamity meets the sea of crime. They have been in evil, and have *not* been delivered from it; but every one who has been taught by the spirit of Christ to understand that evil, in its ultimate essence, is nothing else but transgression, alienation from God, violation of the law of his being; every one who has refused, at all costs, to let the Evil One have any part in him; every one who has prayed from his heart, *Our Father, deliver us from evil*, and has lived in the spirit of that prayer, has been delivered, is being delivered—not indeed from sorrow and sighing in this brief life—not from trial and disappointment, and throbbing nerves, and a wounded heart—but from all that is essentially, from all that is utterly, incurably, and finally evil.

So far from wishing that he had never been born, such a man, happy here even in the midst of anguish, and looking forward to a happiness without

alloy, thanks God for having called him into being, as for His richest boon, and praises Him daily for his creation and preservation, and all the blessings of his life. He can say, without make-believe,

Mid all my store of blessings manifold
I count this chiefest that my heart has bled.

Brethren, have we learnt this lesson? Do we see how immense is the difference it makes in the meaning which we attach to the prayer, "Deliver us from *evil*?" Evil, in the form of pain, bereavement, sickness, loss, heartache, care, disappointment, or some other of its Protean varieties, comes without any exception to every one of us. Evils, in their external form, happen alike to the good and to the bad, to the wise and to the foolish. This was a source of immense perplexity to many of the ancient patriarchs and psalmists. But has not Christ taught us the solution of the difficulty? Has He not furnished us with a means of deliverance, and with countless living proofs of its efficacy? To wicked men evils are evils in all their malignity—horrible, hopeless, not to be told. But in the midst of the very same evils, the good are so strengthened by grace, so illuminated with hope, that "our light affliction which is for a moment" is not to be compared with "that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not

seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal."

Is the soul of God's saint among the lions? Lo! the jawbones of the lions are broken, and they cannot harm him! Is he plunged into some burning fiery furnace, heated seven times by the tyranny of man? Lo! the Son of Man stands by him in the furnace like the Angel of the Dew, and His spirit, "like a moist whistling wind," breathes mercy into the flames. The sting of death, the sting of all evil, is sin. He whom God hath delivered from that evil, and from the Evil One, finds that "to suffer with Christ is not to suffer," and that "in much affliction" there may still "be joy of the Holy Ghost."

Do you ask for proofs, for instances, of this? Why, the world is full of them!

(1) On the one hand, thousands of pleasure-seekers and vicious men have told us the inevitable, incurable misery which their vice and love of pleasure brought them. Shall I quote to you the testimony of the freethinker Diderot?

"To do wrong," he says, "is to condemn ourselves to live and find our pleasure with wrongdoers; to pass an uncertain and troubled life in one long and never-ending lie; to have to praise, with a blush, the virtue we fling behind us; to seek a little calm in sophistical systems which the breath

of a single good man scatters to the winds ; to shut ourselves for ever out of the spring of true joys, the only joys which are virtuous and sublime ; to give ourselves up, simply as an escape from ourselves, to the weariness of merely frivolous diversions, in which the day flows away in demi-oblivion, and life glides slowly from us, and loses itself in waste."

Lord Byron, in defiance of his better nature, gave himself up to debauchery and vice. If any man might have made much of life, what might not he have made—young, beautiful, beloved, gifted, nobly born? What did he make of it? While still a young man, on his thirty-third birthday, he wrote—

Through life's dull road, so dim and dirty,
I have dragged to three-and-thirty.
What have these years left to me?
Nothing—except thirty-three !

He had gained no good certainly, and he had brought on himself the curse of premature and sated weariness.

My days are in the yellow leaf ;
The flowers and fruits of love are gone ;
The worm, the canker, and the grief,
Are mine alone !
The fire that on my bosom preys
Is lone as some volcanic isle ;
No torch is kindled at its blaze—
A funeral pile.

Is it not true, as the Jewish psalmist wrote three

thousand years ago, "The wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot rest; whose waters cast up mire and dirt; there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked"? Is it not true, as is written by the Christian poet of to-day—

Who follows pleasure, pleasure slays,
 God's wrath upon himself he wreaks;
 But all delights attend his days
 Who takes with thanks, but never seeks.

Perhaps the invariable experience of the world has sufficiently convinced you that vice means evil, and means misery.

(2) But do you wish a proof of the other side of my statement, that evils, which in themselves would be terrible and unmitigated, cease altogether to be evils when Christ is with us to help us bear them? Well, again I say, the world is full of proofs. Look at the abounding joy of St. Paul, the joy which rings like the reiterated jubilation of a silver clarion through the Epistles of his dreary Roman captivity. Take another poor wandering self-denying missionary, far from home, among the heathen, smitten with the sun by day and the moon by night, "scorched," he too, "with the heat of Sirius, and tossed by the violence of Euroclydon"—St. Francis Xavier.

Yes, without cheer of sister or of daughter,
 Yes, without stay of father or of son,
 Lone on the land and homeless on the water,
 Pass'd he in patience till the work was done.

In the midst of the crime and squalor of earth's dark places, which are the habitations of cruelty, he, if any man, might have sunk into despondency. On the contrary, he wrote home that he was so happy, so exuberantly happy, that he sometimes almost prayed God to restrain that superabundance of beatitude which He was pouring upon his soul.

In the last generation, a good clergyman, the Rev. Henry Venn, one day promised his children that he would take them to see the happiest man he knew. To their astonishment he took them to a poor garret, in which lay a young man, indigent, and dying of consumption, but with a joy which radiated through his whole countenance from the light of God which shone within him. There was nothing strange in this. That youth had in him a secret and source of joy in which, as by some heavenly alchemy, all evil is evaporated, or turned into purest gold.

(3) And this has been illustrated in whole societies.

Turn to the Rome of the Cæsars, and its own historians have to apologise for the monotony of its wretchedness, and to blush for the corruptions of its shame, amid a society beyond all precedent steeped in pleasure and in gorgeous luxury. Turn to the city *beneath* that city, where, in the subterranean catacombs, the infant Church hid her head mid

ignominy, death, and tombs:—not only will you see nothing but emblems of the peace and joy which triumphed over misery and persecution, and which made exultation and glad simplicity the two characteristics of the lives of the martyrs, but even on the humblest faces of its slaves and artisans, as sketched upon their graves, you will see the beauty of holiness which comes only from the peace of God.

“*Deliver us from evil.*” Is it not true that when we offer this prayer, we think most often of those earthly conditions which men count evil, but which, as we have seen, are to God’s children but blessings in disguise? If so, we utterly miss the spirit of this prayer, and the spirit of all Christ’s teaching. What Christ meant by evil, what alone in its ultimate essence is evil, lies far behind these things. Wealth, rank, power, popularity, ease, pleasure, success—with blind folly we pursue these things and take them for good, but they do not constitute good; the combination of them all may be coincident with deadliest evil. Sickness, obscurity, failure, abuse, hardship, poverty, do not constitute evil; the combination of them all may be coincident with the most glorious good.

Men shun poverty; they toil, and moil, and lie, and cheat, and weary themselves in the very fire for money; yet poverty may be a perfect blessing. Christ chose the lot of poverty. There has hardly

been a great saint or benefactor of mankind who has not been poor; and often to be a millionaire has proved to be an utter curse, and to die a millionaire has been to die disgraced. There is a poverty, honest and noble, like that of Christ, which is transcendently preferable to riches; a poverty which has "its sweet complete untainted happiness like the intermittent notes of birds before the day-break, or the first gleams of heaven's amber in the eastern grey."

Come ye who find contentment's very core
In the scant store
And daisied path
Of poverty, and know how more
A small thing that the righteous hath
Aboundeth than the ungodly's riches great.

Again, we pray, and not unnaturally, against pain and sickness; yet often the couch of the sufferer has been a scene of "joy, passing the joy of harvest, strange, solemn, mysterious even to its possessor." We desire, it may be, gratitude for services rendered, recognition, fame, popularity. We see every day how, in order to gain these things and the little inch-high distinctions which come of them, men will creep and crawl all their lives in the hedge-bottoms; will carefully steer "between the Scylla and Charybdis of yes and no"; will crouch and cringe before the insolent antagonisms of the world; will

even be afraid to stand by persecuted virtue, or to smite the cheek of blustering vice ; and all for what ? —to escape abuse, to win the world's lying praises, to gain the applause of intriguing cliques. Base cowardice ! and how doubly and trebly base when we see it among those whose very duty it is not to babble and compromise, but nobly to rebuke vice and patiently suffer for the truth's sake.

Beneath the heroic sun
 Is there then none
 Whose sinewy wings by choice do fly
 In the fine mountain-air of public obloquy ?
 Come up, come up and join our little band.
 Our time is near at hand.
 The sanction of the world's undying hate
 Means more than flaunted flags in windy air.

Is there anything baser than to thrive by cowardice and complaisance ? Christ said, "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you ; blessed are ye when all men shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." And so, generally, you see how infinitely far is Christ's estimate of evil from the estimate of the world.

When trials come in the path of duty, when the thorn in the flesh is accompanied with the grace of God, God's child counts these things as passing

trials, not as essential evils. They are only evil to the evil; only evil to those in whom the root of evil is. Well have His saints learnt His lesson. Nineteen hundred years ago an aged saint was being led to Rome by ten rough Roman soldiers, whom he calls his ten leopards, to be thrown to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre. Was he unhappy? Did he account cruelty and martyrdom as evils? Nay! a fire of sombre joy burns through each of his seven letters, and in one of them he writes, "Come fire and iron, come grapplings with wild beasts, cuttings and manglings, the wrenching of my bones, the hacking of my limbs, the crushings of my whole body; come cruel tortures of the devil to assail me, only be it mine to attain to Jesus Christ."

What are these words of St. Ignatius but an echo of St. Paul's?—"What things were gain to me I have counted loss for Christ; yea, more, I even account all things loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of them all, and do count them but dross that I may gain Christ." How well the early Christians understood these things, which we—cringeing cowards and effeminate time-servers as we are—in this soft, sensuous, hypocritic age, have so utterly forgotten.

In the year 203, a fair young mother, named Perpetua, was in prison at Carthage. "Have pity

on thy babe,' they said to her; 'have pity on the white hairs of thy father, and the infancy of thy child.' I replied, 'I will not.' 'Art thou then a Christian?' they asked; and I answered, 'Yea, I am a Christian.' Then we were condemned to the wild beasts, and with hearts full of joy we returned to our prison." "Oh! my most dear God," said Luther—brave, noble old Martin, who was worth any thousand of the mannikins who carp at him—"I thank Thee that Thou hast made me poor and a beggar upon earth. Oh! my God, punish me far rather with pestilence, with all the terrible sicknesses on earth, with war, with anything, rather than that Thou be silent to me." Ah! let us learn that what we pray against in this prayer which Christ has taught us, is not earthly loss or trial or calamity, but against the only real absolute evil which there is, the evil which comes from the Evil One, the evil which is in ourselves. From this we pray that we may be protected; out of this we pray that we may be delivered. This is "the root of all other evils, whether penal or afflictive."

And one deep lesson Christ inculcates as to the way of being delivered from it, is when He teaches us not to begin with earthly evils, not to think of earthly evils when we come to God; not to begin with self, not to think of self, but to begin with, to think of, our Father who is in Heaven; to begin

with, to think of, to be absorbed in His name, His kingdom, His will, in the longing for spiritual sustenance, and forgiveness of our sins, and safety amid temptation. When we approach evil through these avenues it scares us no longer. The lions of sin and death roar on either side of us, but they are chained. Unless we do this, we may be led to desperately false and dangerous ways of trying to escape evils which are not evils. We may evoke Satan to cast out Satan, we may palter with God for gold, we may sell truth for popularity, we may barter duty for power, we may turn a cold shoulder on the unpopular, we may join the brutal multitude in trampling savagely on the fallen, we may abandon the cause of militant virtue for that of popular vice, we may turn traitors out of cowardice or courtesy, we may commit self-murder at last in utter self-disgust with our evil self. But when we look at evil solely in the light of God, when that which seemed terrible, because it was so manifold, is condensed into "one thing only," and means nothing but opposition to God's will and transgression of His law, we shall regard no other evil as fatal. Our very sorrows will be beatitudes, for they will help to purge away the vile dross from us, and transmute us into purer gold.

"Before I was troubled," said the psalmist, "I went wrong; but now will I keep Thy law." There is such a thing as welcoming tribulation when we

know that God only sends it for our good. When the wise slave Lokman was seen eating a bitter melon which his master had given him, and was asked how he could do it, he answered, "My master has given me multitudes of good things. Should I not eat one bitter melon if it comes from his hand?" Has not the experience of many been what Wolsey's was?—

His overthrow leaped happiness upon him ;
For then, and not till then, he felt himself,
And found the blessedness of being little,
And, to add greater honours to his age
Than man could give him, he died fearing God.

My brethren, in these thoughts there is a good lesson for you, for me, for all of us, if we have the heart to learn. It is to count sin as the only evil which can be fatal to us ; it is to dread no evil but sin, and when we pray for deliverance from evil to pray most of all for deliverance from the Evil One, and from the evil world, and from our evil selves. When we approach any evil which is not sin, in the light of God it becomes transfigured. The only evil which is in the smallest degree terrible is to have any share in wickedness or in any worldly gift which compromise with wickedness might bring to us.

"O ye who love the Lord, see that ye hate the thing that is evil. The Lord preserveth the souls of His saints ; He delivereth them from the hands of

the ungodly." Deliver us from evil, our Father, by filling us with Thy good.

Old friends, old scenes will lovelier be
As more of Heaven in each we see!
Some softening gleam of love and prayer
Shall dawn on every cross and care.
Seek we no more; content with these,
Let present rapture, comfort, ease,
As Heaven shall bid them, come and go.
The secret this of rest below.
Only, O Lord, in Thy dear love
Fit us for perfect rest above,
And teach us this, and every day,
To live more nearly as we pray.

III.

“But deliver us from evil.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 13.

IT is natural that there should be much of which to speak in this climax of the prayer which the Son of God taught us to address to our Father in heaven. In my first sermon on this clause I tried to impress you with that reality and awfulness of evil which nothing short of infatuation leads us to ignore. In the second sermon we tried to discover what was the root of all evil; and we found that this root was sin. It is sin which, because it violates the true law of our beings, transmutes itself into all other evils, and lends to them their worst virulence; whereas the elimination of sin from those things which we call evil, robs them altogether of their power to destroy. All other evils

May startle well but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong-siding champion, Conscience.

And one thing which may be said in favour of the

rendering " Deliver us from the Evil One " is that it prevents us from confusing essential evil with its transient manifestations, and fixes our minds on the truth that the sting of all man's curse is sin.

But having thus considered the nature of evil we must proceed to the deeply important question, What do we mean when we ask to be delivered from it? Is it only a helpless cry to God for mercy, or does it demand anything at our hands also?

Have you ever noticed that " Deliver us from evil " may mean either of two very different things? It may mean protect us from evil. When the pestilence walketh in darkness, let it not come nigh us; when the arrow flieth in the noonday, avert from us its fatal and envenomed shaft. Or it may mean, alas! we are in the very grip of evil; the Evil One has us in his clutch; the fire is scorching us, snatch us as brands out of the burning; our trembling souls are in the snare of the fowler, let the snare be broken that we may be delivered. We mean, then, either let us not fall into this pit of destruction, or pluck us out of it. Keep us from sin, or since we have sinned, let not sin be our final ruin.

In point of fact the prayer means both. We are God's people, and the sheep of His pasture; we are sheltered in the fold, or wandering from it; the grey wolf and the leopard and the lion crouch and glare all round it. Let them never leap into it; or, if they

have seized us, O good shepherd, smite the wild beasts and save us from their fierce teeth and rending claws. The prayer means, both protect us and rescue us, because we need both always. It may be said that if our iniquities have already taken such hold upon us that we are not able to look up, we are past the prayer "Protect us from evil," and only need the cry "Rescue us out of evil." But it is not so. Sin is fearfully cumulative; one sin leads to another; when any one of us has consciously taken sin by the hand, we know not into what mire, into what abysses, it may drag us. In the lowest deep there may still be a lower deep. We still have need to cry, Protect us from yet further, from yet worse developments; let not the sinful thought ripen horribly into the guilty purpose; let not the guilty purpose break disastrously into the deadly act. Many a ruined soul, suffered to fall into depravity more shameful than he had ever deemed possible—suffered to become guilty of deeds from which he would once have started with indignant horror—has discovered that, to the very last, evil men wax worse and worse. Unless God protects them from yet more heinous wickedness, they know not into what depths of Satan they are sure to fall at last.

But now that we apprehend the two-fold significance of this petition, let us notice that, like all the other six petitions, it is in both its meanings no

otiose prayer, no helpless cry, but at the same time a pledge from us, a demand upon us. The prayer "Deliver us from evil" is idler than the breath which utters it unless it means that we hate the evil; that we pledge ourselves to the utmost to fight against it. If we are really asking something *from* God, we must really give something *to* God. If we are earnest in the prayer, "Protect us from evil into which we have not yet fallen," the prayer becomes an hypocrisy unless we prove its sincerity by our watchfulness. If we are sincere in the cry, "Rescue us out of the evil into which we have fallen," the prayer is an even deeper hypocrisy unless we are ready to prove its sincerity by offering to God our determined resolution, our constant effort. Let us consider both.

We pray, Our Father protect us from the destroyer of our souls. And God replies: "My child, I will protect thee; but, in order that I may do so, thou must watch. I cannot protect thee from that which thou thyself seekest; from that, which with secret treachery, thou desirest. I say to thee eat not of the forbidden fruit; but if thou goest to the tree, gazest on it, thinkest of it, longest for its fruit, talkest with the tempting serpent there, thy prayer is unreal, and thou wilt eat of it, and find thyself ashamed and naked, and wilt die."

It is useless merely to pray against temptation,

unless we watch against it too. Take instances. We see on all sides of us many guilty, many ruined men, who have been made such by gambling, by impurity, by drink. If a young man beginning life would escape their dreadful fate, may he not well pray to God, "Protect me from those curses." But of what use is such a prayer if he dallies with the unclean thing? Can he pray not to be defiled, if he takes the pitch in his hand? Can he pray not to be scorched if he treads on the burning coals? Might he not just as well assume that a river is not a river, and so walk into it and be drowned, as assume that temptation will not be temptation to him, and so dabble in it, and tamper with it, and be ruined? * A clerk sees that a fellow clerk in his office has begun with petty pilferings, and gone on to embezzlement and felony, and a prison cell, by the excitement of betting and greed of gain. He would fain be protected from such a fate; but of what use is such a prayer if he interests himself in the betting lists and goes to the gambling house, or plays for money?

A working-man sees his mates dragged by drink into the bottomless pit of humiliation. He sees their drunken wives and their ragged, dirty, depraved, miserable children; he sees them sinking into mere wrecks of dehumanised humanity, abject

* Edward Irving.

slaves of a dead thing, human beings no longer with God's image upon them, but wretched funnels for drink, doomed to end in delirium tremens, and the pauper's grave. Of what use is it for him to ask God to protect him from this insanity if, instead of saving himself and his family by total abstinence, he, too, lounges for hours in the public-house, daily exciting his animal passions and dulling his moral sensibilities?

Or suppose that a young man sees his friend blighting himself with the sins of his youth which shall lie down with him in the grave, poisoning the very fountains of his blood with the germs of foul disease, sowing for the harvest of death the seeds of corruption. Ah! well may he pray to be delivered from this sorcery of uncleanness, which is the secret curse and unutterable shame of so many lives! But of what use is it for him so to pray if all the time he is inciting and inflaming within him by morbid day dreams, by unclean imaginations, by polluted thoughts, by corrupt communications, and so at last by lewd and lavish acts of sin, the very sparks which, with all his might, he ought to trample fiercely beneath his feet?

Ah! let us never forget: the rule is not only "pray," but it is "watch and pray" that ye enter not into temptation. It is Christ's word, "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch"; it is St.

Peter's, "Watch and be sober"; it is St. Paul's, "Watch thou in all things," "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, be strong." Oh! remember next time you pray this prayer, each time you pray this prayer, that if you desire that God should protect you from the evil which is in the world through sin, you must watch against it and suffer in yourself no truce with temptation, no secret league with death, no unacknowledged covenant with hell.

Yet I doubt not that most of those here present feel even more the pressing need for the other aspect of the prayer, which is—Rescue us out of the evil which already has seized upon us with the grasp of a vice; which already, like a serpent, has wound us in the folds that threaten utterly to crush us. Yes, and this is an even more urgent prayer than the other, because it is far, far easier to keep innocence when it has not yet been lost than to recover safety when it has been lost. It is far, far easier to keep out of the grasp of temptation than, being in it, to shake it off. It requires a more stupendous miracle of the grace of Christ to burst the fetters of habit, to snap the adamant link which fetters crime to consequence, to cut off the entail of deadly curse. But this form of the prayer also is the idlest of all nullities if we do not show that we mean it, by resolution and by effort.

This thought is supremely illustrated by the great poet of the Middle Ages. Perhaps his powerful allegory may help to impress it more deeply upon you. Dante, to cure him of perilous temptations to anger, avarice, and lust, has been led by Virgil to see the things that are, and to see them as they are, and has therefore been round the horrible circles of the damned. He has been enabled to struggle out of this Inferno, and his feet are now on the shore of the steep mountain island of Purgatory—*i.e.*, of penitence. But first, to cleanse him from the clinging mists of the abyss, under the sweet hue of eastern sapphire and the serenity of the pure air, his guide leads him to a place by the sea, which shimmers beneath the dawn, and stooping to set his hands on the dew of the wet grass, he tenderly washes Dante's defiled and darkened cheeks. Then, in place of the vain monastic girdle which Dante has flung away, he girds him with a rush, the only plant which will grow in the beating surges, but which is no sooner plucked than another grows in its stead. You see the meaning; when we desire to be rescued from sin, which is hell, our souls must first be washed from the grime of our pollutions in the dew of God's forgiving grace; and then, since forgiveness for the past is one thing, but deliverance from the perils of the present and the future another, our loins must be girded for strenuous endeavour. But

our girdle must be the rush of humbleness, which grows again when plucked, because the means of grace are never exhausted.

Then the poets see an angel-guided boat steering towards the island mount. The souls who are in the boat are chanting "When Israel came out of Egypt." When they land, Dante recognises the soul of the sweet poet-musician Casella, and asks him to sing to them, and all gather round to listen to his song. But instantly the stern guardian of the place rebukes them. "What is this," he cries, "slothful spirits? What negligence, what loitering is this? Speed ye to the mountain to strip you of the slough which allows not God to be manifest to you." There the key-note is struck: no repentance without effort; nothing must interfere with that repentance, which, to the sinful, has become the very work of life.

What he who would be rescued from evil must say is—This one thing I do. When—whether from new passion for the good, or new pain at the evil—the soul collects itself for a supreme effort, it must attend to nothing else. For the mountain of penitence is steep. The entrance to it, indeed, by a good resolution, is so easy that it is like a mere gap in the hedge filled up by a forkful of thorns; but, once entered, the soul must climb, and climb, and climb, however weary, with only this consola-

tion, that the more resolutely we climb the more easy will the climb become.

I received the other day an anonymous postcard on which was written the single sentence "I am weary of repenting." Alas! repentance that becomes weary is scarce repentance; it may only become a repentance that needs repenting of. But to the soul that perseveres there are on the road sweet resting-places of hope, wherein it seems carried up as on the wings of eagles; and the more one mounts the less it pains; and so, the first thought followed by a resolve, the first divine resolve followed by an action, leads to the portal of conscious deliverance. It is so narrow that to Dante it looks but like a crack in the solid wall of rock. It is approached by three steps, the first of white marble, so smoothed and polished that it mirrors the whole man; the second of inky purple, rugged and fire-burnt, and cracked lengthwise and across; the third of porphyry, red as the blood which spurts from an artery. Above these three steps is a threshold, as of diamond, on which, in ashen-coloured robes, with keys of gold and silver in one hand, and in the other a dazzling sword, an angel sits in silence. Prostrate at his holy feet, Dante asks for mercy; and while he smites upon his breast the angel with his sword-point marks the letter P—for *Peccatum*, Sin—seven times upon his forehead, and bids him

wash off those fatal letters as he toils up the steep terraces within. Then, unlocking the door on its strident hinges, he says, "Enter; but notice well—he who looks back must return."

Ah! my friends, if you see the meaning of this profound allegory, you see what this prayer "Deliver us from the Evil One," requires of us. The steep, steep climb is the toilsome struggle against our sins, habits, and treacheries, which must follow the resolve to be made free. The crack in the rocky wall is the straight gate; the white step, in which we shine reflected, is the step of absolute sincerity. The dark purple step, with the cracks on it which make a cross, is deep contrition, "breaking the hard heart of the gazer on the Cross;" the scarlet step is the step of love all aflame, "offering in self-dedication the life-blood of body, soul, and spirit." The adamant threshold, the rock of diamond, which masses itself over them, is the merit of Christ's atonement. The angel who sits thereon is the Angel of Penitence and Forgiveness; the sword he bears is the sword of penance and penalty for our past transgressions; the seven P's which he marks on our foreheads are the *Peccata*, the Seven Deadly Sins, of every one of which, in greater or less degree—if not in deed, then in word; if not in word, then in thought—we have been guilty—pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, excess, and lust. Each of these sins is punished

on one of the terraces of purgatory, till, by hatred of the evil, and love of the opposite good, the angel can brush, one after another, each of the fatal brands from the sinner's forehead with his soft and starry plumes. And the soul that is in earnest, the soul which is aroused sufficiently not to grow weary in the effort after salvation, does not shrink from the toil, does not murmur at the penalties. For

Hearts that verily repent
Are burdened with impunity,
And comforted by chastisement:
That punishment's the best to bear
Which follows soonest on the sin,
And guilt's a game where losers fare
Better than those who seem to win.

The true penitent climbs up the steps of sincerity, contrition, love, to Christ's pardoning grace, and then is purged one by one of all his stains. On the topmost terrace sensual sinners have to be purified in burning flame; yet they are "contented in the fire," because it is purging away the vileness of their shame.

Dante, too, has to pass through that healing flame. The angel bids him, and he stretches forth his clasped hands, and remembers the hideous sight which he has seen of men being burnt to death, and stands still in fear, against his better conscience. Yea, for it is not easy for a man to face

a wasted past and a scorching future. It is not easy for him

To pick the vicious quitch
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.

It can only be done by agonies and energies, and the effort can only be sustained by the invincible sweetness of what lies beyond. Then he enters the flame, but "When I was within," he says, "I would have flung myself into molten glass to cool me, so immeasurable was the burning there." Yes! have you ever in your life been forced to be utterly ashamed of yourself; to think what a vile, corrupt, shameful, shameless sinner you have been? If so, you know at least something of that awful blush of shame which adds heat to the seven-times-heated furnace, but which all must undergo who so have sinned. Not until they have repented in shame, as in burning fire, will they hear the angel-voices chanting "Come, ye blessed of my Father." Nor will they know what that meaneth, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

My friends, I have borrowed the aid of the powerful immortal allegory to bring home to you the truth that if for protection from evil you need watchfulness, so for rescue out of the power of evil you need resolve and effort. And this is what Christ and all His Apostles teach. "Strive," says our

blessed Lord,—literally “*agonise* to enter in at the straight gate.” “Fight the good fight,” says St. Paul, “lay hold of eternal life.” To labour fervently, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily and follow Christ, to mortify our members which are upon the earth, to crucify the flesh, to bring our bodies into subjection, to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye; this, and nothing short of this, is required of us if we would be delivered out of the evil to which we have disastrously given a part in our souls; and, if we be sincere in our desires, this, and nothing less than this, the grace of God will enable us to accomplish.

Oh! let us then remember what we have learnt so far. Evil, the deadliest and worst of all possible evil for human souls, is ever around us and within us; if God be with us its human semblance may touch us, but we shall be utterly unscathed by its essential curse. We pray to be delivered from it, and we can offer no prayer which is so awfully necessary for every one of us. But if we mean “Protect us from it,” we must not only pray, but watch; and if we mean “Rescue us out of it,” we must toil, and climb, and agonise, and fight, and endure even unto the end. But he that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved.

IV.

“But deliver us from evil.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 13.

WE have now considered in three sermons this prayer, in which lies so much of the meaning of human life. We first tried to realise that the deadly phenomenon of evil in the world is not one with which we are unconcerned, but that the happiness of the present and the destinies of the future depend upon the relation in which we stand to evil—whether of intense antagonism, to our soul's health, or of compliance and participation, to our utter destruction. We then tried to understand what Christ meant by evil, and we saw that He meant, mainly and primarily, all sin and wickedness and our ghostly enemy, and everlasting death, as being the source and the issue of all other evils, and that which alone gives them their deadly sting. Last Sunday we tried to grasp the truth that the deliverance for which we pray is only to be gained by prayer accompanied by watchfulness, prayer which is at once the

inspiration and the outcome of resolution and effort. It remains to-day to consider by what means, if our prayer be sincere, God can and will deliver us from evils and from evil: alike from physical calamities and mental misery, and, above all, from that dis-severance from His presence and transgression of His law, from which all other evils ultimately spring.

“*Deliver us from evil.*” First, in its lower sense, from the evils of this life, from the evils of penalty and consequence, from outward mischief, from human vulgarism, stupidity, and malevolence, from trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. Deliver us from these in both senses. Protect us from them, so that “the enemy shall not be able to do us violence.” Rescue us out of them. “Take us out of the mire, that we sink not; let not the waterflood drown us, neither let the deep swallow us up.”

As for protection from these miseries of this sinful world, it can, at the best, only be relative. It is not God's will—as things are, it would not be good for us—that the world should be our rest or our home. “Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground,” says Eliphaz the Temanite, “yet man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” We do not need testimony, we only need experience, to teach every one of us that sorrow and sighing must befall us. “In the world,” said our Lord and Master, “ye shall have

tribulation." We whose sun is already sinking towards the west, oh! how many trials have we not experienced, and we know not how many others may be in store for us. Surely it is in mercy that God hides the future in His gracious impenetrable darkness. If from the days of happy boyhood men could look forward to all that awaits them—the disillusionment, the struggle, the failure, the bereavements, the losses, the throbbing nerves, the often aching heart—how would they be able to endure? The poet takes the little children on his knee, and says to them :

O, little feet! that such long years
Must wander on thro' hopes and fears,
Must ache and bleed beneath your load,
I, nearer to the wayside inn,
Where toil shall cease and rest begin,
Am weary, thinking of your road!

"It is now sixteen or seventeen years," says Edmund Burke, in a celebrated passage, "since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles, and surely never lighted on this orb, which she hardly seemed to touch, a more delightful vision. I saw her just above the horizon, decorating and cheering the elevated sphere she just began to move in, glittering like the morning star, full of life and splendour and joy. Little did I dream when she added titles of veneration to those of enthusiastic

distant respectful love, that she should ever be obliged to carry the sharp antidote against disgrace concealed in that bosom." And Burke wrote before the crowning agonies, hardly to be described, which burst over that fair Queen; before the days when, husbandless and worse than childless, she left her prison to lay upon the block her grey discrowned head.

"To-day," wrote the gallant Sir W. Napier, "is the anniversary of the Battle of Nivelles, in which I won my lieutenant-colonelcy. I was then strong and swift of foot. Only one man got into the rocks of La Rhune before me, and he was but a step, yet 800 veterans, strong as lions, were striving madly to be first. I am now old, feeble, bent, miserable, and my eyes are dim, very dim, with weeping for my lost child, and my brain is feeble also. I cannot read with pleasure, still less can I think or judge." Alas! it is not only for the great that life has such calamities in store. They happen to the humblest and the most obscure; they happen (though look how differently!) to the wise and to the foolish, to the good and to the bad. To the brightest boy or girl here present remains the certainty that the days will come and the years draw nigh in which they too must say, "We have no pleasure in them."

If, then, God does not altogether protect us from these evils, can He, will He, has He any means to deliver us out of them? Yes! He has the perfect

means. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. He maketh sore, and bindeth up; He woundeth, and His hands make whole; He shall deliver thee in six troubles; yea, in seven shall no evil hurt thee; in famine He shall redeem thee from death, in war from the power of the sword; thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh." The troubled psalmist found, and thousands of God saints have experienced after him, that "He healeth them that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness;" that "many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of all."

He delivereth him; but how? I cannot answer better than good Bishop Andrewes does, that God delivers us in four ways. God delivers us, first, when He doth *quickly take the evil* from us, and not suffer it to continue to our utter overthrow. When "His wrath endureth but the twinkling of an eye, and in His pleasure is life; heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Secondly, He delivers us when He mingles some *comfort* with our affliction, that He may make us bear it the better. Sudden calamity came on Joseph in Egypt. He was hurled from his prosperity into a dungeon; calumny, like the poison of asps, blighted

his innocent name. Yet, even in prison, God sent him sweet alleviations; and so made him forget all his labour and travail that he called his first-born son "Manasseh," or "Forgetting." And so, too, David says: "In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, Thy *comforts* have refreshed my soul." And so, too, the poor, sick, hated, persecuted St. Paul wrote: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our affliction."

Thirdly, God delivers us out of evils by giving us patience to bear them. We think little of this virtue of patience, resignation, submission; but it is very dear to God, because it cannot exist without faith and hope, and because it is closely akin to humbleness and charity. Any calamity is more than compensated to us if it teaches us, by patience in the day of adversity, to acquire possession of our souls.

Fourthly, God delivers us out of these evils by turning them into greater good. He chastens us *in* the world that we may not be condemned *with* the world. He turns the tears of sorrow into the pearls of a brighter crown. By weaning us from the transitory, He leads us to the eternal. By emptying us of the world, He fills us with Himself. He makes the *via crucis* the *via lucis*. He causes us, in the very fire, to thank Him that our light affliction,

which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

He whom in these four ways—by removal, by comfort, by patience, by divine compensation—God thus delivers out of calamities need not fear ;—

He shall not dread misfortune's angry mien,
Nor idly sink beneath her onset rude.

Much more, then, should he proceed to offer with all his heart the prayer in its other sense : “ Deliver us not only from evils, but from the evil of all evils ; from sin ; from the Evil One. Deliver us, for Thou art our Father. Deliver us from the Evil One, for he is not only our enemy, but Thine.”

Now, here the sad thing is that so many who offer this prayer do not really believe in it. Either they do not wish that it should be granted, like that poor African youth who prayed to God against his impure passions, with the secret hope that God would not yet hear him, that he might indulge in them a little longer ; or they do not believe that it can be granted, like that unhappy poet who, choosing to assume that he was reprobate, set himself to secure his own damnation, and work all uncleanness with greediness. The two things which prevent sinners from really crying to be delivered from the Evil One are the secret treachery which would fain keep both its sin and its Saviour ; or the despairing apathy which

drives men into the wretchlessness of unclean living. Of that secret treachery, which does not even really wish to be delivered, I shall say nothing. God alone can deal with it.

But of that other hindrance—men's despair, men's disbelief that they can ever be purified, that God can ever bring a clean thing out of a thing so unclean as they—of that doubt I must speak; for I feel sure it lurks in myriads of hearts.

Is it not the old doubt of Nicodemus, when Christ said unto him: "Verily, I say unto you, ye must be born again"? "How can a man be born again when he is old?" querulously asked the Rabbi; "can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" To whom the Saviour replied, "Verily, I say unto you, unless a man be born again of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." He does not say that this spiritual regeneration is not a miracle; only that it is a miracle which must be wrought, and without which no soul among us shall see salvation; seeing that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.

And if you say that, whether this miracle must be wrought or no, you do not believe that it ever can or will be wrought on *you*, I answer, "Man, what is this, and why art thou despairing? God shall forgive thee all but thy despair." You shall have

evidence, clear and unmistakable, that it has been wrought, and that in many cases; and that in age after age, and again and again, on multitudes fully as evil as you have been. Why not on you?

You say (who has not heard it said? is it not true that many sinners among you have said it to themselves?), I believe that some are innocent, that there are some of whom the grace of God has taken early hold, so that they have kept innocency and done the thing that is right, and are at peace; but I—can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? I, who from my earliest years have been perverted and corrupted by assent to sin; I, who long ago wilfully took sin by the hand; I, all the thoughts of whose heart are only evil continually; I, so tied and bound with the chain of my sins; I, who am so stricken with this leprosy—no, I do not believe that I can ever be delivered now. It is too late. I am a prisoner, fast bound in misery and iron. You might as well bid the worm throw off the rock that is crushing him, and soar like the eagle, as bid me dream of deliverance or of freedom from this strangling load of sin. I know how it will be. I shall go on sinning and hating myself, and vainly pretending to repent, and sinning again; and the sin may give me up, but I can never give up the sin, until, at last, the pit shall shut up her mouth upon me.

To whom the answer is, O friend, O brother, O sinful soul, thou art thinking of thyself, and not of Christ; thou art looking to the place where the fiery serpent has bitten thee, and brooding over the venom in thy veins; not raising thine eyes to Him who was lifted up for thy healing, as Moses lifted up the brazen serpent in the wilderness. All that thou sayest of thyself is true. Thou art abject; thou art impotent; thou art diseased; thy evil habits and thy evil nature may well seem to thee as locks and keys upon the gate of hell. Of thyself thou canst do nothing. But thou art not asked to do it of thyself; and thou canst do all things through Him that strengtheneth thee. He can uplift; He can heal; He can inspire; He can even purify the unclean. It is to the helpless who feel themselves helpless, if with all their hearts they truly seek Him, that He will most surely come. He

Can roll this strangling load off thee,
Break off thy yoke, and set thee free.

For so it has been with many as bad and as impotent as thou. Hear the memorable confession of the martyr St. Cyprian. He had been a Pagan, rich, worldly, eloquent, entangled in Pagan sins. He grew disgusted and horrified at the world's misery and wickedness. Nevertheless, being an alien from truth and light, he thought it impossible to be born

again; or, while still bound to the body, to be changed in heart and soul. How, he asked, is such conversion possible? How can the impulses of natural temperament and the indurations of engrained habit be laid aside? How can avarice, luxury, ostentation, ambition, be exchanged for self-denial and humble simplicity? Will not the drunkenness, the pride, the passion, the lust in which I have been entangled retain their seductiveness? Not so. St. Cyprian sought God, and found Him. He received that moral resurrection. The vice-corrupted heathen became, late in life, the godly Christian, and after many years of holy and pure living, he died a martyr of his Lord.

Take, again, the yet more remarkable conversion of St. Augustine. His Confessions tell us that, from boyhood upward to mature manhood, he had been base, deceptive, and, above all, so deeply stained and corrupted with all sorts of impurity, that it seemed to him utterly impossible that he should ever live a chaste life. Yet God found him. God spoke to him at last in the text, "Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof." Augustine was converted; he was born again. The miracle of God's grace restored to him the clean heart and the right spirit within

him; and thenceforth his life was that of a chaste and holy saint.

But why do I touch on individual instances? Was it not thus with the whole Christian world when the call of Christ came to them? Might they not have said, when they were called to be saints, How vain the call to us? We are steeped to the lips in the abominations of a Pagan society. We are in a world wherein common goodness is hardly to be found; wherein the deadliest corruptions pass for venial peccadilloes; wherein holiness—even as an aspiration, even as an ideal—is not only unknown, but undreamed of. Nay, more than this. We have ourselves been fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, thieves, covetous, drunkards, extortioners, and worse, if worse be possible. Yet look at the mighty change! “And such were some of you,” writes St. Paul to them. “These things, these abject victims of lust and greed, were some of you; but ye are washed; but ye are sanctified; but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in the spirit of our God.”

If God's miracle could thus regenerate a world, is it beyond His power to give you the new birth, if you truly seek Him? My friends, have you been so unhappy as never to meet with instances of the drunkard who has been reclaimed? of the polluted who has become clean? of the selfish whose cold,

hard heart has been filled with love? There have been myriads such. And since there is hope while there is life, there is not one of you—no thief, no harlot, no drunkard, no unclean or profane person here—who may not, in answer to his prayer for cleansing, hear Christ's echo, "I will; be cleansed!" If you will pray with all your heart "Deliver us from evil"; if with your prayer you will watch and resolve and struggle, yours also shall be the blessedness of him whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered; to you also will God give the comfort of His grace again, and restore you with His free spirit.

FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM

“For Thine is the kingdom.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 14.

THESE words are taken from what is called the doxology to the Lord’s Prayer. If you turn to your Revised Version you will not find them. In the record of that prayer, as given by St. Luke, they are omitted altogether by all the best manuscripts. In the record by St. Matthew, you will find them given only in the margin, as occurring in some ancient manuscripts, although with variations. And for this reason, in our public worship, they are sometimes appended, and sometimes omitted by our Church.

They cannot therefore be certainly regarded as having formed a part of the Lord’s Prayer as it was first taught by Christ to His disciples. Yet even if they did not, they are so absolutely scriptural, so divinely appropriate, so entirely accordant with all the models of the prayer offered to His heavenly Father by our Lord Himself, that we rightly use them as a liturgical addition, which, in all pro-

bability, derived its sanction from the teaching of the Spirit of God, as far back as the age of the Apostles.

They are fitting as a due expression of praise after the seven petitions which we have offered. In them the prayer returns full circle. We have prayed that our Father's name may be hallowed, and we here confess with adoration that His is the glory. We have prayed that His kingdom may come, and we confess that His is the kingdom. We have prayed that His will may be done in earth as in heaven, and we acknowledge that His is the power. We have brought to Him our needs, our guilt, our peril; we acknowledge that He alone can supply, can deliver, can forgive.

I know not how it may be with others, but I confess, that to me, as life goes on, as I experience more and more how illusive is all that the world promises, and how empty is all that it bestows—I confess, I say, that I find even deeper comfort in these eternal verities which tower like mountain peaks into the blue air of heaven. From squabbles over the infinitely little, we mount to a serener air when we fix our thoughts only on the love of God, the tenderness of Christ, the silver wings and the refreshing dew of the grace of the Comforter. The questions which whistle like empty winds and roar like brawling streams through the narrow banks of

contemporary religion and contemporary politics, sink into a distant murmur when we take our stand by these eternal seas.

There is no truth more constantly reiterated, more emphatically insisted on throughout Scripture, than this—that “the Lord is King, be the people never so impatient; He sitteth between the Cherubim, be the earth never so unquiet.”

What would men’s lives be if they really felt and grasped the stupendous truth that there is a God; and that we shall all stand at His judgment seat? Nearly three hundred years ago, in this church,* before the assembled House of Commons, at the opening of the session of 1621, Bishop Lancelot Andrewes preached a sermon on the text, “God standeth in the congregation of princes; He will judge among the gods.” He told the members of Parliament—who in those days, now gone for ever, came in hundreds to this their own church—that God was standing, and that God would judge, among them; that if they would regard His standing, they would never need to fear His judging; and that, so to regard it, they had need of these four things—

(1) Set down this and believe it, that He is present;

* The last few sermons of the course were preached in St. Margaret’s, Westminster.

- (2) So behave yourselves as if you did believe it ;
- (3) Show yourselves well affected to His presence ;
- (4) Do those things which may make Him rejoice to be among you.

I repeat his words. I say that, be he legislator or be he private citizen, he who is able to grasp those two sentences, "Deus stat, Deus judicabit," would scarce need any other restraint from "prejudices, private interests, and partial affections," or any other impulse to all that is noblest, most inspiring, most regenerative in human life.

We none of us deny God's presence ; but which of us believes it in the only true sense of the word 'believe' ? Men in all ages have tried all sorts of subterfuges to get rid of it. Behind the supreme God they have put some dark shapeless thing which they called Destiny, and have thought that it was this immense solitary spectre which was the real Lord of all. No more blighting error could exist. You see the curse of it in Mahometan fatalism, which withers like an atrophy every nerve of life, and tends to drown men in the bottomless pit of sensuous apathy. To those who seek Him God makes Himself known ; to those who thus deny Him He falls silent.

And some are so absurd as to think that Chance made all things—"Chance" a word so senselessly irreligious that it does not once occur on the page of

Holy Writ. How can any reasonable being fall into such stultification of the intellect, such ignoring of the conscience? Chance is the antithesis of order, and the universe is full of order. Chance is the antithesis of law, and all the material forces, even when complex, work with mathematical exactness. Chance is the antithesis of harmony and adaptation, and the world is full of harmonies and adaptations, numberless and exquisite.

We have but thoughtfully to consider the unintelligent creation to find in it an intelligent, a personal, an eternal, omnipotent spiritual power. Nature alone leads us at once to Nature's God.

But a king is no king of ours unless we be his subjects; and some men seem to adopt the old Epicurean belief which admitted God, but denied Providence; which believed in the Personal Supreme, but thought that men were accidents of accidents for which He cared not. They thought this because they would not face the problem of evil, and so they held that the gods absorbed in their own selfish enjoyment were utterly indifferent to the agonies of men. But, though something is wrong which we cannot explain, we see even in Nature that the Eternal Power, which is ever transmuting evil into good or educating good out of evil, desires and loves the happiness of His creatures. First, then, we find God; next we find that He is omnipotent; then that He is good. We

learn that God is ; and then that God is love. Further, which infinitely concerns us, He teaches us that He is righteous. If by our Reason we find the being of God, from our Conscience we learn the duty of man ! If in Nature we see the relations of God to man, in Duty we see the obligations of man to God. All human history, all human experience, teach us that the infinite realities of life lie not in rank and power, not in pleasure or wealth, not in the gratification of earthly desires, not in the petty differences of religious opinion or religious practices, but in the distinctions between justice and injustice, truth and falsehood, selfishness and generosity, courage and cowardice, licentiousness and chastity. Even the Agnostic can see that we are but passing in brief and swift procession between two eternities ; and that our lot will be decided therein and thereafter according as we do good or do evil. And when we say : "Thine is the kingdom," we acknowledge this. We mean, if we mean anything, that in the long run righteousness will justify itself ; that goodness only is divine and eternal ; that "injustice and wickedness may be long-lived, but Doomsday comes to them at last."

All truths that are true should be capable of verification, and these truths are so. The assertion, "Thine is the kingdom," is not only a conclusion of the reason, it is the sole explanation of the life of man. Men who have tried to get rid of it have only proved

it with more overwhelming force, as if one should fling up a stone to disprove the law of gravitation, and it fell back and crushed him. Over and over again, colossal human tyrannies have been dashed to pieces by the stone cut without hands, and have proved that no kingdom which is not based on God's righteousness can ever stand. Egypt threatened to exterminate the people of God, and lo !

The Red Sea waves o'erthrew
Busiris and his Memphian chivalry.

Assyria terrified the nations with a tyranny the most colossal and the most horrifying which the world has ever seen, and the humble prophet of Israel, strong in God's protection, in the very zenith of Assyria's pride, exclaimed : " The virgin, the daughter of Sion, hath despised thee ; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee." Babylon mightily oppressed the nations, and Babylon is a mound of *débris* in the desert where the shepherd shuns to pitch his tent. Greece seduced and bewitched the world with the enchantment of her fascination, and Greece perished in the enervation and decrepitude of her own vices. Rome stamped upon her subject dependencies her iron impress, and Rome, in her turn, infected by the corruption she had learned, wandered through the world vainly seeking for air unpoisoned by herself.

Shall we take the last of these vast attempts to

succeed without a conscience, and to substitute man's despotism for God's kingdom? Intoxicated with empire, flushed with uncounted victories, the first Napoleon cynically proclaimed to a trembling Europe: "I have observed that God is always on the side of the strongest battalions." Was He so? Napoleon scattered kingdoms among his brothers and his generals, and but for England might have made French satrapies of all the Continent. Amid bursts of cheering his Grand Army crossed the Niemen; he won the awful battle of Borodino; he took Smolensko; he dictated a despatch from the Kremlin at Moscow. Then the soft snows of God—no more—began to fall; and, annihilated by the most insignificant of the powers of heaven, his *Grande Armée* was tossed out of Russia by the spear-points of the Cossacks, and the despot of the world was flung aside, at last, to die on a miserable islet amid disputes with a poor English soldier about etiquette and champagne.

Nor has it been otherwise with Churches when they tried to thrust themselves into the place of God.

How did it fare with the enormous pretensions of the once irresistible Papacy? No Pope had ever boastfully uttered such great swelling words of vanity as the guilty Boniface VIII. in 1300, in his Bull, *Unam Sanctam*, in which he declared that the whole

human race was subject to the Pope of Rome; yet three years later, he, at Anagni, received from William de Nogaret, the descendant of a martyr whose blood had been shed by priestly tyrants, that blow on the cheek which showed that his power was gone. No one had more shamelessly exercised a sensual infallibility than Leo X., and he had on his side the mightiest of living potentates, Charles V. Against them the simple monk, Martin Luther, stood alone before the assembled cardinals and kings, with the simple words "Here I stand; I can do no other. God help me!"

And which won? The Papacy was smitten with impotence, and Charles V. retired to over-eat and over-scourge himself at San Yuste in miserable *ennui*. The Church of England, thank God, became a Reformed Church, never to be otherwise unless she apostatise from every noble principle of intellectual freedom and national greatness. Then Philip II., with infinite prayers to saints—prayers vainer than the breath that uttered them—sent his Invincible Armada, laden with the spoils of Mexico and the thumbscrews of the Inquisition, to burn and torture England back into the doating and anti-Christian superstitions which he called the Catholic faith. What came of his Invincible Armada? Answer, ye free winds of England, when God *efflavit vento et dissipavit eos!* Answer, ye white cliffs and rocky promontories, strewn with shattered and unwieldy wrecks!

Answer, spirits of our fathers, from every wave! The thunder of England's caravels hurled back their defiance to the intriguing Jesuits and their decrepit debauchee. England, so long as she is England, shall know no king save Jesus Christ, and no priest, impotently usurping the sole priesthood of her Lord, shall tyrannise in her dominions. If ever she should sink again, through the supineness and effeminacy of her children, into a miserable decrepit priest-ridden England—a pale reflex and feeble echo of mediæval superstitions—if she should not stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made her free, but voluntarily entangle herself again in the yoke of bondage—though she have been the first among the nations, her last end shall be that she too shall perish for ever.

Thine is the kingdom. With what deeper awe, with what more abounding comfort, with what grander inspirations, can we, as citizens, enter on the duties which from time to time claim all our energy than with those inspired by the sense of this mighty truth? And it is everywhere around you if you will notice it. It is written on the heavens above and on the earth beneath; now in autographs of love and beauty, and now in blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke. Will you not see God because He is so near you? Will you not recognise His kingdom because of its familiarity?

“Oh! where is the sea?” the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal waters through;
“We’ve heard from of old, of the ocean’s tide,
And we long to look on the waters blue.
The wise ones tell of an infinite sea:
Oh! who can tell us if such there be?”

Shall we men be like those ignorant fishes? We are members of God’s kingdom: in it we live, and move, and have our being; it lies around us in the atmosphere we breathe. Shall we ignore it? Shall we live as though it were not? Shall we violate its conditions, defy its laws? Our citizenship is in heaven; shall we act as though earth were our sole habitation, and this life and its gauds and degradations our be-all and end-all? Ah! if we acknowledge the truth of Christ’s kingdom on our lips, let us acknowledge it in our lives. If God’s is the kingdom, what is our duty to Him as His common subjects but to promote His will among our fellow-men? Can we not make it our aim to weigh every measure that comes before us in the balances of the sanctuary—never to let the interests of right be left undefended for fear either of the sneers of cynicism or the forces of greed? Can we not promote, with all our might, every measure which makes for righteousness? Can we not throw an ægis of inviolable protection over the miserable and the oppressed? Is it not our duty to sweep away the feverous slums and rotting tenements which rob mankind of pure air and pure water and blight them

from generation to generation into squalor and disease; to see that the children of the nation are brought up, not only in rudiments of superficial knowledge, but in sound learning and religious instruction; above all, to smite, with no timid hand, the hoary head of every inveterate abuse, and strip ruthlessly of their ill-gotten gains all those who live by pandering to the vices and promoting the ruin of their brethren? And if we are not legislators, still the legislators must obey the voice of the nation, and the duty ever rests on us to help to frame that public opinion which sways the Senate, and shakes the throne, and 'precedes the chariot of Almighty God,' and is heard before the Judgment Seat.

Thine is the kingdom.

When, three centuries ago, in 1557, the Spaniards, under Philip II., were besieging Coligny in the little town of St. Quentin, they shot over the city walls a shower of arrows to which were attached little strips of parchment with promises meant to seduce from their allegiance the starving and fever-stricken inhabitants. Coligny thought it sufficient to take a piece of parchment, to write on it the two words, *Regem habemus*, to tie it on a javelin, and hurl it into the Spanish camp. The king of Coligny was the wretched Henry II. of France. Have we then no king? Is not Christ our King—the King of verity and judgment, the King of mercy and tender-

ness, the King who loved us and died for us, the King who sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high? We can roll forth in thunders of music:

Crown Him with many crowns,
The King upon His throne;
Hark, how the heavenly anthem drowns
All music but its own!

But oh! that we, too, would seize our lives as a javelin, and writing on them the two words *Regem habemus*, would hurl it with all our force into the serried ranks of the enemies of God. This, however, is certain: Christ's is the kingdom, and they only can inherit it, and they only, whether as men or as nations, can share its blessings, who love, who acknowledge, who obey, who live in faithful allegiance to Jesus Christ, who is its King.

THE POWER AND THE GLORY

“The power and the glory.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 14.

ALTHOUGH this doxology to the Lord's Prayer may only have been an early and liturgical addition, I trust that none of us will regard it as unnecessary or meaningless. In it, as I have said, the Prayer returns full circle. We began with God; we end with God. Christ teaches us, in approaching God, not to come merely as needy, tempted, guilty creatures. Such indeed we are. As needy, we require to pray, *Give us our daily bread*; as guilty, *Forgive us our trespasses*; as tempted and imperilled, *Deliver us from evil*. But we do not offer these petitions of our human impotence and wretchedness until, losing ourselves in God's infinitude as a drop is lost in the ocean, we have first offered the universal prayers which entreat the hallowing of God's name, the furtherance of His kingdom, the fulfilment of His will. And when we have added to these the cry of our necessities, we return once more in this doxology to the acknowledgment of our own

nothingness, and confess that the kingdom, the power, the glory, belong to God.

And in all this there lies one of life's deepest lessons. The curse and destruction of our being is the reference of everything to self. What is it which makes the life of so many millions of men mean and wretched? Is it not because they are the sole suns of their own systems? The universe to them is like that looking-glass room at Wartburg, which on every side reflects nothing but their own persons. They fill the air with the clamour of their own egotism, the fury of their own desires, the obstinacy of their own opinions, the querulousness of their own disappointments. Now, until self be cast out of us, and God be suffered to take possession of our hearts, we are lost. It is this which Christ would teach us in the Lord's Prayer—the vision of all things in God; the viewing of every problem of life in the light of God; the conquest of all evil in the strength and by the aid of God. Without God, alienated from God, man loses all that is manly, all that is divine in his own manhood. He sinks below the beasts that perish. He sells his birthright for a mess of pottage. He becomes as the serpent for malignity, as the tiger for fury, as the wolf for greed, as the swine for degradation.

Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how mean a thing is man!

Man, with the seven devils of the seven deadly sins in his heart, is a thing to shudder at and to abhor; man with Christ in his heart becomes but a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour.

Thine is the power! Scripture is full of this truth. "God spake once; and twice also have I heard the same, that power belongeth unto God." It is visible enough even in this insignificant atom of a globe. When we say, "Thy righteousness is like the strong mountains; Thy judgments are like the great deep," we say enough to show us our utter littleness even on the globe which is our transient home. Patriarchs and prophets, apostles and evangelists, knowing nothing of the secrets which science has revealed to us—only knowing the beauty and the wonder of this our poor little visible earth in its most superficial aspect—were yet convinced that the invisible things of God, even His eternal power and Godhead, were clearly manifested by the things visible. They needed no lesson but what they could learn from "the mountain-peaks that stand, ridge beyond ridge, serene in the region of perpetual snow; the summer clouds, images of such mountain tracts, even upon a grander scale and tinted with more gorgeous colours; the thundercloud with its dazzling bolt; the stormy ocean with its mountainous waves: the

aurora borealis, with its mysterious pillars of fire ; for all these are sublime, and all these elevate the soul, and make it acknowledge a mighty Worker in the elements." It was sufficient to the Psalmist that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork"; but how much more would this spectacle have branded into their souls the nothingness of man if they had known that there are five thousand firmaments of starry infinitude, and a hundred millions of fixed stars which are within telescopic reach ! And these are but "the lumps which have flown from the potter's-wheel of the Great Worker,—the shred-coils which, in the working, sprang from His mighty lathe—the sparks which started from His awful anvil when the solar system lay incandescent thereon—the curls of vapour which rose from the great cauldron of creation when its elements were separated."

Should it not be enough to prove to man the absoluteness of his dependence, the depth of his insignificance, that—though his earth travels in the year through four hundred millions of miles round the sun—yet not only his own tiny system, but even the whole stellar galaxy, is probably but "an islet in the boundless void," a speck in the intense inane, the outermost fringe of an illimitable universe ? We talk of space, we live in space ; and yet space

is a thing not only absolutely indefinable, but absolutely unthinkable. It is a circle, of which the centre is everywhere, the circumference nowhere. We cannot imagine it as limited by any conceivable boundary, nor can we in any way grasp its "endless extension and ever-widening infinitude." We can but confess that we are creatures of a day, crushed before the moth; that man in himself is but "a shadow less than shade, a nothing less than nothing," and that "power belongeth unto God."

And, as Pascal pointed out, we stand between *two* infinitudes. There is another infinity beneath us. It does not need the starry heavens above to prove God's omnipotence. Vanini, when in prison on a false charge of atheism, touched a straw on his dungeon floor with his foot, and said to the gaolers, "From that straw I can prove the being and almightiness of God." Yes, atheism stands branded with fatuity in every water-drop, in every emerald tuft of moss, in every stain of grey or orange lichen on the crag. The least of God's works is as infinitely beyond the reach of our cognisance as the greatest.

What, then, is life? One tick of the clock between two gulfs of eternal silence; an atom suspended between the two abysses of infinitude and nothingness. In this vast vacuity of incomprehensible being even man's imagination drops down, "fluttering

her pennons vain," and he sees himself to be but "an animalcule in the limitless expanse, a mote in the faultless glory, a flutter in the eternal calm."

Is there no lesson but curiosity in all this? There is this lesson, that there can be no effort so futile as the attempt to resist the will of God, and no infatuation so insensate as to kindle His displeasure. For if Reason reveals to us His dread magnificence, Conscience no less clearly whispers to us His revealed will. The physical Creator of the universe is also its moral Governor. Pitying man's abjectness, apart from his Maker, God gave him those two great Archangels of Reason and Conscience to lead him along this path of duty:—Reason and Conscience, "two ministers of His, who expound His purposes, who do His bidding." These two great Archangels are sent to us "to conduct our course, attending us on the right hand and on the left; walking by our sides with tranquil and steadfast countenances, with grave and measured steps; but making us feel that we may not deviate or stop lest they should turn upon us their intolerable looks of calm yet awful indignation." *Thine is the power!*—and therefore it is utter madness for man, an ephemeral in these æons, to do anything but walk humbly with his God, in that obedience in which alone lies for any man the path of happiness, the path of safety.

Thine is the power; and thine is the glory! That

seems to me much more difficult to understand. For God is so infinite that nothing which we call human glory can furnish us with any analogy to His. We must go back again to the primary idea of the word glory, which is light and splendour. And not only does God "cover Himself with light as with a garment," but "God *is* light." When we say "Thine is the glory" we mean that without God the physical world would sink into a chaos of darkness, the moral world into an abyss of crime. In a starless night all is black; but from the moment that the dawn has kindled its first beacon-light of vivid crimson on the ice-clad mountain-peak, it fires—summit after summit—the splendour of the hills, and flows down their sides in rivers of molten gold. The streams flash into silver; the sea burns beneath the flood of radiance; the fields burst into colour; the forest leaves and dewy flowers gleam with millions of diamonds; the whole world thrills and burns with lustre and with life. Like that is the glory of God. God is light; He is that light, bodiless and impalpable, from whose unemptiable fountain our earthly light is but a faint spark, or a dim shadow.

And in God's heaven there shall be no night; they need no lamp, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God giveth them light, and through the brimming flood of light—"their wings of gold, their robes white as snow, their faces radiant as pure flame,"

in multitudes of splendours, like living topazes or living rubies, move the angels of God about the throne of Him who

Never but in unapproachèd light
 Dwelt from Eternity :—dwelt then in thee,
 Bright effluence of bright essence uncreate.
 Or hear'st thou rather, pure ethereal stream
 Whose fountain who shall tell ?

And is there no lesson for us again in this our acknowledgment of the glory of God ? Yes, there is this most searching lesson if we will learn it. The earthly correlative to " God is light " is " Walk in the light." Be ye children of the light. Bring forth the fruits of light. Cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. To the dark, defiled heart should there be no healing agony in the thought that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ?—that He searcheth the reins ; that no concealment is possible from Him ; that He readeth the inmost thoughts ; that all things are naked and open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do ?

All Christianity lies in the text that " God is light ; and darkness there is not in Him, no, not in any way." And in Christ He manifested Himself ; and Christ said, " I am the light of the world. Walk while ye have the light, that ye may become sons of light." What is a jewel in the midnight ? It is a cold chip of worthless stone, but let light fall on it, and, in the words of that beloved great American Bishop,

whom, to our deep grief, Christ has called away,* you may then see the jewel as it is—"see depth opening beyond depth, until it looks as if there were no end to the chambers of splendour that are shut up in that little stone; see flake after flake of luminous colour floating up out of the unseen fountain which lies somewhere in the jewel's heart." So is it with the human soul. If your soul is untouched by the transforming light of Christ, it is dull and vile. But when the light of God shines on it, it will be changed from glory to glory. The glory of God is the analogue of holiness in man. It is worse than vain for us to talk of God's glory if we live in the deeds of shame. If our life grovels in the charnel house of death and darkness, then for us the light hath shone in vain.

If we would become partakers of God's glory there must be in us no subterfuges, no duplicity, no hidden places full of shame and sin, no secret chambers of unclean imagery, not two lives in one. Oh man, wouldst thou have a share in the glory of God? Then must thou be open as the sunlight, transparent, simple, sincere, guileless, pure, with no guilty secrets for which to blush, with no dark spectres haunting the secret chambers of thy life.

Thine is the power and thine the glory. My friends, it is Christ alone that can reconcile us with that

* Phillips Brooks, Bishop of Massachusetts.

power whose laws we have offended, and give us back the image of that glory which we have defiled. A German poet, in his vision, was carried into the illimitable zone of worlds. The earth fell back into the abyss of distance; heaven after heaven, galaxy after galaxy in the starry wilderness, unfurled before him its innumerable banners, and reeled away behind him into the infinite; and as he sped through dead seas of vacuity, and belts of unfathomable blackness, and new cycles of worlds, till his whole soul was terrified and faint, from the depths came floating to him a dark globe along a sea of light, and on it was a thorn-crowned Child. And lo! he says: "I saw that the planet was this earth, and the child was the Child Jesus. He had come forth to comfort me, and threw on me a look of gentlest pity and unutterable love. Then in my heart I felt a sudden rapture of joy which passed all understanding, and in the tumult of that happiness I awoke and thanked God for life."

My friends, in Christ alone shall we apprehend the power and glory of God. In His light alone shall we see light. Oh, that each soul here, which is now sitting in darkness and the shadow of death, would hear His call, "Arise! shine, for thy light has come."

FOR EVER AND EVER

“For ever and ever.”—ST. MATTHEW vi. 13.

THERE is very much more to say on these tremendous words than can at all be said in one sermon. I would only glance at them to-day in their most ordinary bearing. And do not let the profoundest person here think that this must be mere waste of time. On the contrary, all the ruin and all the misery of life come to us, not because we are ignorant of what is original and recondite, but because we refuse to take home to our hearts the most obvious and every-day truths. There are many of God's children who hold very superficial views about time and eternity, who yet rightly apprehend, and wisely shape their lives by the great fact that, though life is short, yet the soul is immortal; and that the manner in which we spend this brief day is of infinite significance in its bearing on the endless life beyond.

For ever and ever! When the Saxon nobles were gathered in Godmundham, in the hall of Edwin of

Deira, to hear the Roman missionary Paulinus plead the truth of Christianity, an aged warrior rose and said, "Oh! king, the life of man on this earth, in comparison to the unknown space, is like that which may happen when you and your nobles are seated at supper in the winter season, and when a fire is lighted in the midst, and the room filled with the genial heat, while the whirlwind rages and the snow falls outside, and a sparrow flutters quickly in at one door and flies as hastily out at the other. During the short time it is in the room the chill of winter does not touch it, but in an instant the serenity it has enjoyed in its flight has disappeared, and as you look upon it, it has flashed from the darkness of winter at one door into the darkness of winter in which it disappears at the other; such too is the brief measure of human life. We know not what went before; we know not at all what shall follow after. If the new religion can teach us this, then it is one which, in my opinion, ought to be adopted by us." So spoke the Saxon warrior. We, brethren, have known that religion, have been baptised into it from our infancy. If there are hundreds of us on whom those truths exercise no influence, or infinitely less influence than they should do, is it not because we fail to realise them? and do we not fail to realise them because we never duly remind ourselves of them?

For ever and ever! The imagination which can enter into the meaning of those words reels before them. There is something awfully pathetic and mysterious in the interminable procession of mankind over our earth. There are at this moment on the globe some fifteen hundred millions of human beings, passing for their brief span across its surface. A few years past and they were not; a few years hence and their place here will know them no more. The commonest things we use outlast us; on those very benches shall be sitting generations yet unborn, long after we are dust. Out of the darkness, out of the great deep we all came; into the darkness, into the great deep we all are going. We know not what we are; we know not whence we came; we know not what we shall be. No gleam comes, no whisper thrills from the other side of that curtain, "impenetrable as midnight, yet thin as a spider's thread," through which we all must shortly pass. Only two or three broad elementary facts are clear to us—that God made us; that our bodies are not ourselves; that when we die we do not die; that our well-being, here and hereafter, depends only on obeying the will of God; that all else is, in comparison, less than nothing. The bridge of three-score and ten arches, and one or two broken ones beyond it, with a black cloud at either end of it, and many trapdoors through which multi-

tudes are dropping every moment into the rolling waters of that prodigious tide—yes, that remains a most true picture of human life!

And should we not expect that men would at least be serious in this short journey, and do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with their God? We live for a moment; we shall live for ever and ever. Yet how are we occupying ourselves? Multitudes of us in chasing bubbles.

Things needful we have thought on; but the thing
Of all most needful—that which Scripture terms,
As if alone it merited regard,
The one thing needful—that's yet unconsidered.

How can this be, except because we yield habitually to the stupid sorcery of things near and present? "What mean," said I, "those great flights of ravenous birds that are perpetually hovering over the bridge?" "These," said the Genius, "are envy, avarice, superstition, despair, love, with the like cares and passions that infest human life. "Alas!" said I, "man was made in vain! How is he given away to misery and mortality, tortured in life, and swallowed up in death!" You know, my brethren, for you are Christians, that no one of us need either be tortured in life or swallowed up by death; but rather richly blessed by life, and nobly crowned in death. It all depends on whether in this life we have laid up our treasure on earth, where the moth

and rust corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, or whether our treasures are, where our hearts are, laid up in heaven, hid in Christ with God.

For ever and ever! I am quite sure that God meant us constantly to bear in mind—never to let our thoughts stray from the fact—that life is short, opportunity fleeting, the soul immortal, the destinies of the soul deeply coloured, if not for ever fixed, by the actions of to-day. Not Scripture only, but nature, life, biography, history, literature, experience, are full of reminders that life is but a fading flower, a house of clay, a shepherd's tent, the flashing to and fro of a weaver's shuttle, a brook which feels the glare and disappears, foam upon the water, smoke that vanishes, a cloud, a mist, a mirage, the flight of a bird through the unrippled air, the pathway of a keel in glassy waters. Like a dream when one awaketh—that is its epitaph. Nature is full of death. The leaf falls, the tree dies, the grey earth is wrinkled with the graves of her children. From the rocky hills and from the rolling waves start up in numbers numberless, from "ever-extending pavements of gravestones," the spectres of dead individuals, dead races, dead genera, a universe of dissolution. Life is full of death. The air is tremulous with knells; there are vacant chairs in our homes; the dust is strewn over the faces that we loved. What is man, whose breath is in his nostrils?

For ever and ever! Two things are most noticeable about our life here: that it is so brief, and that it is so silent. The young cherish the vain delusion that life is long, but God has only made our days, even for the oldest, a span long. What is our life? It is even as a vapour, so soon passeth it away and we are gone. And it is in deep unbroken silence that the years allotted to us pass away. They make no noise as they roll over our heads. The stream of time flows on with the profoundest stillness. All that we know is that it has passed us, and we can only wonder that it should so soon have sped.

We wake with a start, and find that the summer is gone, the autumn ended, and we are not saved. The boy wakes with a start to find himself a man, unequipped for life's battle, a wasted boyhood with all its lost store of golden opportunities behind him. The man wakes with a start to find himself an old man; to find that his life is practically over, his work practically done, and that nothing remains for him but to sink into the dark river, over the sudden precipice of an accident, or down the lingering declivities of a disease. And so, for each of us in turn, the universal truism becomes the personal experience. For we do not take these lessons to heart when we might do so with the deepest profit, and

All men think all men mortal but themselves.

For ever and ever! Is it not the worst of follies to let the fact of the shortness of life have no effect—for to most men it practically has no effect—upon our conduct? And I am sure that it was to make this truth more powerfully sway our motives that God made this life, not only so brief, but also, in its purely temporal interests, so empty. Yet even this universal lesson we will not learn.

“Jesus once said,” so runs the legend in the Koran, “‘The world is like a woman who said she had too many husbands to count.’ ‘Did they die?’ He asked. ‘Nay,’ she answered, ‘I always murdered them.’ ‘Strange,’ said Jesus, ‘that the rest were so foolish as to love thee still, though they saw the fate of all their predecessors.’”

“If,” exclaimed St. Chrysostom, “I were the most eloquent man in all the world, and my pulpit were a mountain-top, and the whole world were gathered for my congregation, I would preach on no other text than this: ‘Oh! ye sons of men, how long will ye have such pleasure in vanity, and seek after leasing?’” And yet it would be in vain, for God’s lessons are in vain. Men act as if a madman should spend all he had on furnishing the cabin which he would only occupy for an hour’s voyage, and leave himself to be landed helpless and penniless on the land where all his means would be most needed and all his future would be spent.

Look how men on all sides of us are toiling for riches, and making so vast a provision for so short a journey. "He that getteth riches," says Jeremiah, "and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at the end shall be a fool."

Fame? Who does not know that it is always "half disfame," that "it is the misery of being great still to be aimed at"? The great are a helpless mark for the coarse lies and vulgarities of a peering malice, and the sad weak beast of envy always wounds those that attain distinction.

And military glory? Is there not always "the spear of Mantinea in the side of Epaminondas"?

The wreath of the poet, then? Yet how many poets, in despondency and madness, have sighed with the great Petrarch, "Some can still rejoice; but for me, I see not what anything in the world can give me save tears."

Success then, and rank, and power? Yet, even in this century, more than one English Prime Minister has died with an almost broken heart; and the great Pope counted his unexpected elevation to that giddy height as the most irretrievable of his misfortunes; and the great archbishop wrote to Lord Strafford, "I look not for many days, for I am not well; nor for happy, for ever since this honour has come to me I have felt a kind of sadness upon me."

“I swear,” says the unhappy young Queen, in Shakespeare,

“’Tis better to be lowly born
And range with humble livers in content,
Than to be perk’d up in a glistening grief
And wear a golden sorrow.”

Indeed, I hardly know which are most to be pitied, —those who have madly desired something all their lives, and wounded their consciences, and have, after all, failed to reach the poor glittering bubble; or those who have reached it, and at whose touch it has burst. There was once a splendid orator,* who, aiming at a splendid prize, turned his back on his most righteous convictions; and of him the poet wrote his stern lines, “Ichabod”—

So fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore;
The glory from his grey hairs gone
For evermore.

Reville him not! The tempter hath
A snare for all;
And pitying tears, not scorn and wrath,
Befit his fall!

Of all we loved and honoured, naught
Save power remains;
A fallen angel’s pride of thought
Still strong in chains.

* Daniel Webster. The lines are by J. G. Whittier.

All else is gone : from those great eyes
 The light has fled :
 When faith is lost, when honour dies,
 The man is dead !

It was frightful to play for a great stake, to fling away what was loftiest in purpose for it, and yet in the end to lose it ; but, after all, it would have been as worthless—perhaps even more bitter, more empty, more unsatisfying—if he had obtained it for a few brief years.

That is what happens to men : they sell their souls for the promise of a mess of pottage. Sometimes the devil gives them their mess of pottage, and years after come the awakening shame and the exceeding bitter cry. They pluck the forbidden fruit, and no sooner have they tasted it than it turns in the mouth into dust and ashes. No “powerful snatch,” at the devil’s gilded lure can ever escape the anguish of the lacerating hook. It is the lesson put with such immense power by Shakespeare in his *Macbeth*. That mighty play represents the Nemesis of conscience. It comes out in such lines of the murderer-king as :

Naught’s had, all’s spent,
 When our desire is got without content.

or, again—

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,
 And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,

Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind ;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murdered,
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them ; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings—the seed of Banquo kings !

Even so ! Every soul which sells itself for greed, or pleasure, or success, or any earthly thing, by deviating but a hair's-breadth from the path of righteousness, must inevitably hear the terrible word of its Creator, "Thus saith the Lord, thou hast sold thyself for nought."

For ever and ever ! Oh, my friends, it is easy to sweep these facts aside as truisms, as platitudes ; it is terribly difficult to realise that on these truisms, on these platitudes, verified by the experience of all mankind, depends the whole meaning of our present and our future. Let me suppose that you are prosperous, at ease, comfortable ; that the world for the time being satisfies you ; that you have not yet discovered that you are giving your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not. Well, may it not merely be that "Ephraim hath grey hairs upon him, and knoweth it not" ? May it not be that the meridian of worldliness is being left unvexed ? May it not be that God has said, "Ephraim is turned unto

idols; let him alone"? Might not an utter self-disgust, might not a divine discontent, be a healthier and more hopeful state for you than this settling upon the lees? Is it good, in the place of the twelve fair fruits of the Spirit, to be content with a fungous brood of vile delights, or, at best, of passing pleasures,—

Sickly and pale,
Dull mushrooms coloured like a corpse's cheek.

In any case, how long will your ignoble contentment last?

Once, when a king was being conducted in a splendid triumphal procession, in all the intoxication of human pride and glory, one of his flattering courtiers asked him, "What is wanting here?" And with a sigh answered the magnificent monarch, "Continuance!" Yes, "for ever and ever." That belongs only to what is divine in man. Continuance, permanence, is the stamp of the eternal life; evanescence, momentariness, the blight of this.

All the things we hold for pleasant and needful, even when they do not lift up the sluices of a flood of calamity to drown us, yet do not outweigh one atom of holy bliss. Even if the things for which men toil and moil, and weary themselves in the very fire, could last, they could not satisfy the noblest nature for a day; they could not satisfy even the meanest for a year. Shall we then leave our souls

in this heap of mud? Shall we spend and strain our efforts to gain this "dust in the midnight?" Why, it would be even worse for us if such things did last! Of their own selves they would dwarf us into vileness and insignificance. Believe me

The worst of miseries

Is when a nature, framed for nobler things,
 Condemns itself in life to petty joys,
 And, sore athirst for air, breathes scanty life
 Gasping from out the shallows.

For ever and ever! Death is near us all. How near none of us know, but near even to those for whom it seems furthest. Ought not, then, our one prayer to be the prayer of St. Thomas of Aquino, "Give me, O Lord, a noble heart, which no earthly affections can drag down"? And, to attain our prayer, the secret is, "Love not the present things, of which the possession burdens, of which the love defiles, of which the loss tortures; but love those things only which shall last for ever and ever." The day is at hand when the world and all that is therein shall perish. Will all have vanished? Will nothing stay? Will man, too, perish in that consuming surge? Not so! Innocence and holiness are beyond the reach of destruction. Death is impotent against true nobleness. It has no power over faithful service. Its dart strikes no pang into the breast of humble duty. It cannot

weaken the wings of prayer, or disturb the serenity of conscience, or calcine one gem in the treasury of heaven, or shrivel one line on the pages of the Lamb's Book of Life.

For ever and ever! Think of it! We are

Of far too infinite an essence
To be contented with the lies of Time.

Why, then, do we forsake the living fountains for our broken cisterns? He who eateth of this bread shall hunger, he who drinketh this water shall thirst again; but he who eateth the bread of life, and drinketh of the water which Christ shall give him, shall hunger and thirst no more. Lord, give us that water! Lord, evermore give us that bread from heaven, which is Thyself! Give it us as we kneel at Thy holy table; give it to us now and for ever, and for evermore!

AMEN

L.

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness."—REVELATIONS iii. 14.

DURING my last month in this Abbey church I endeavoured to bring before you, clause by clause, the profound, I might say, the unfathomable, significance of the Lord's Prayer. Every year leaves me more unalterably convinced that the sole deliverance from our follies, our perils, our wanderings, whether in the nation, or in the Church, or in our individual lives, lies in grasping the undisputed verities, and in shaking ourselves free from the fantastic accretions to the religious truths of the Gospel. If we would really know God, it will not do to rely on ecclesiastic shams, or traditional falsities, or exorbitant inferences based on isolated texts. We must build ourselves on the solid fundamental truths of elementary religion and on the primary requirements of elementary morality, as on the granite bases of the world. It is to these things, not to the phantasmagoria of those corrupt and

anti-Christian developments, which have their origin in the eternal Pharisaism of the human heart,—it is to the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, it is therefore to true religion, as apart from false and finical religionism, that I have been trying to direct your whole attention. By this alone can we be ennobled; by this alone can we be saved.

From the ten words, the utterances of the voice of God from Sinai, we learnt that what that supreme and sacred majesty requires of us is innocence alone; that religion is neither a petty ceremonialism nor an ecclesiastical system, but a good heart and a good life; that, when all is said or done that theologians can say or priests can do, the only end of a holy life is to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. From the Lord's Prayer we learnt that true godliness depends on our relation to our Father in heaven; on our reverence for His holy name; on our efforts to further His kingdom; on our determination to do His will; on our toil for the bread of life; on our forgiveness of our brethren, as the condition of that divine forgiveness which each of us so sorely needs; on our struggle against temptation; on our prayer and effort to be delivered from the evil. The Ten Commandments are the catechism of all morality; in the Lord's Prayer lies the essence of all religion which is pure and undefiled.

I wish to consider now the word with which the Lord's Prayer closes—the word Amen. It is the *signaculum consensus*, the seal of our faith, and the *rotum desiderii*, the fervency of our longing. It is the stamp of the sincerity with which every prayer is offered. I do not propose to-day to dwell on its liturgical use, but rather on its inmost and essential significance. It is a very solemn and sacred word. In the Gospel of St. John alone, no less than twenty-five times our Lord Jesus Christ introduces His deepest asseverations with "Amen, Amen"—translated in our version, "Verily, verily—I say unto you." But I cannot show you the dignity of the word more awfully than by telling you that in the Old Testament this word "Amen" is given as the very name of God, and in the New Testament as the very name of Christ. In Isaiah (lxv. 16) we read, "And He shall call His servants by another name, so that he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself *in the God of Amen*, and he who sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of Amen." In the New Testament we read that in Christ is the Amen; and St. John says in my text, "Thus saith the Amen, the true and faithful witness."

What, then, is the meaning of this solemn and sacred word? It means Truth; it means Reality. Every time we use it we should be reminded that God is not the God of fantasies and shams, but that

He is the God of reality and of truth. And I want this afternoon to bring before you the awfulness of truth—*i.e.*, of reality, of sincerity, of guileless simplicity, both as regards the life that now is, and as regards the eternal life which is the life of man's spirit.

First, as regards our earthly life. We may spend our lives either in the world or in God. If we live in God, if the life which we now live in the flesh is lived in the faith of the Son of God, then are we living in the world of reality; if we are living for the world, if we are setting our affections on the things of the earth, we are living in the midst of fatal delusions and fading shadows.

There is a celebrated passage in which the great Greek philosopher, Plato, describes the life of men on earth. He compares men who have never tried to face the truth to prisoners in a deep underground cavern, who have been so chained by the neck and feet that they cannot turn their heads. In front of them is the rocky wall of their prison-house. Behind them and above them is a causeway, on which fires are burning, and along this causeway pass wayfarers singing and conversing and bearing burdens, whose shadows are thrown by the firelight on the cavern wall, and whose voices are reflected back from it. The imprisoned denizens of the dark cave, seeing only these flickering shadows, take them for sub-

stances and realities ; and hearing only these vague echoes, take them for songs and voices. And if one of them should be carried up a path which winds behind the cave, and should see the real men and hear the actual voices, and look on the fire which casts the shadows, and should then be ordered back again to the cavern prison, his eyes, dazed by the light, would be unaccustomed to the gloom, and by his fellow-prisoners he would only be despised and hated as a half-crazed mystic ; while he, on his part, would scorn their belief in shadows, and the importance they attached to such dim and distant unrealities.

The image of the great heathen thinker still remains true. Imprisoned in self-chosen darkness, steeped in emptinesses, how few among living men even care for that wisdom which consists in seeing the things that are, and seeing them as they are ! Let a man but once catch a glimpse of the true light and he learns utterly to despise the dim rush-light of this world's tinsel stage. Let one ray out of eternity shine down upon him, and for him the world and the things of the world shrivel into insignificance.

Take the two lives which are most prominently brought before us in the annals of Israel—the life of Solomon the king, and the life of Elijah the prophet. Solomon lived amid shams. If a man could

be made happy by dazzling magnificence, by dizzy exaltation, by the soft seductions of luxury, who so happy as that great king, with his golden thrones and ivory palaces and voluptuous harem? Did the shadows give him happiness? "Vanity of vanities," saith the preacher, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity!" It was all thrice-doubled emptiness. Solomon was a miserable man.

Who follows pleasure, pleasure slays ;
God's wrath upon himself he wreaks.

Solomon found, as all men find, even under the most favourable circumstances, that the soul cannot live upon these coarse and barren husks. What did he get out of them? Did he get happiness? even pleasure? No. Bitter disappointment; enervated lassitude; a loveless home; a heart consumed to ashes; the loathliness of satiety; the misery of the unsatisfied; the despair of the faithless, and the shame of the unclean. Not so the rough prophet of the wilderness. He had no wealth but the hairy mantle; no rank but the royalty of inward manhood; no luxury but cruse of oil and barrel of meal; no home but caves and dens of the earth; no popularity—prophets and reformers never have—but the proud man's scorn and the base man's sneer. But he heard the words of God, and saw the vision of the Almighty; and he shone on the Mount of Trans-

figuration beside his Lord. And St. James appeals to him as the most striking example of the prayer which moves the arm of Him who moves the world.

It is the lesson which Robert Browning points in his epistle of Karshish. To Lazarus, who has been raised from the dead, the earthly estimate of things important is reversed. Trifles seem to him of consummate significance; events deemed great become as nothing.

Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness
 Or pretermission of the daily craft;
 While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep
 Will startle him to an agony of fear.
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb;
 Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin;—
 An indignation which is promptly curbed.

This is the picture of a man to whom the falsities of earth are less than nothing, because the truth of God is all in all. And when a man thus realises the Eternal and lives in the Unseen, he often becomes a prophet, and will meet a prophet's doom. If he boldly rebukes vice and error he must be prepared to suffer patiently for the truth's sake. The world regards such men with mixed

hatred and contempt. Ahabs and Jezebels persecute them; Pharisees slander, and do their best to crucify them; worldlings call them fanatics and faddists, as they call all who take part in real reforms. Priests, devoted to surface and semblance, smite them on the cheek, as the Priest Pashur smote Jeremiah; or mock them, as they mocked Isaiah; or say that they have a devil, as they said of John the Baptist; or call them Samaritans, as they called Christ. Happy are they! The enmity of the world, and the world's sham religion, shows that they are not living for and amid its shadows, but for and amid the realities of friendship with God.

Which are you doing? The world is seen and near and present; it looks alluring and seductive as that crude apple looked to Eve. It glows like the rosy rind of the Dead Sea fruit; it glitters like the fresh scales of the sloughed serpent; it fascinates like the siren's maddening song. But did anything ever come of it except misery and disappointment—the whirlwind harvest from the sown wind? “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes. But know thou that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment.” God is the Amen, the Eternal Reality. He has set His canons against fraud and lies, and hate, and lust. Obey

Him or disobey Him, "at your pleasure and at your peril." Believe in Him or disbelieve in Him, at your pleasure and at your peril. But He is, and His law is, the sole truth of your life.

Sow a pleasant vice, and reap its poisonous harvest; sow a crime, and reap a retribution; sow a lust, and reap a ruin and a degradation; sow to the flesh, and reap corruption. These things are unreal, as a dream when one awaketh; their fashion passeth away like a vapour. The mere shams of earth, the vain and vile delights of the vicious life, are as the poison of asps. They involve a multiplicity of horrible miseries, as if a man did flee from a lion and a bear met him, or went into a house and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him.—But God is the Amen, the Eternal Truth, of reality and of righteousness.

Earnestly, then, I would invite you all to base yourselves on the Amen, on the solid and ultimate reality of life, by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and to base your lives on the Amen of true religion, on those things which cannot be shaken, but remain. In these days, as in all days, a great deal is mixed up with religion, and thrust into factitious importance in it, which is not religion, and has nothing whatever to do with the God of Amen, with the

Christ who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness. He who makes the eternal Church depend on mere outward forms; he who bases its high claims on some unprovable theory, which may be a pure fiction; he who confounds religion with the shibboleths of sects or of parties, or the usurpation of priests, builds upon the baseless and shifting sands. Of multitudes of views and practices now thrust by force on vexed and alienated nations, we can only say :

The earth has bubbles, as the water hath,
And these are of them.

The Church depends solely on the presence of Christ. Where Christ is, there His Church is; and where love and holiness are, there Christ is. Wherever we find the fruits of the Spirit—love and meekness—there the Spirit is; where we find the works of the flesh, such as arrogance and slander, there, in spite of all boasts and pretences, the Spirit is not. The title deeds of the Church are her holiness and the purity of her witness, not fables and vain genealogies. The reality of the Lord's Supper lies not in a gross materialism, but in the spiritual presence of Christ in the heart of the faithful receiver. The efficacy of the Sacrament does not depend one iota on the time when it is eaten, but on the repentance, faith, humility, and love of the receiver. The witness of the Church is not to the doctrine and command-

ments of men elaborated amid the corruptions of the third and fourth centuries, and perpetuated through dark ages of oppression, robbery, and fraud; but, when she is awake to her true functions, she is a witness to the great simple verities of the Apostles' Creed as the foundations of religion; a witness to the broad truths taught us in the Lord's Prayer; and a witness to the eternal validity of the Ten Commandments as the foundations of morality.

Sweep away from your religion as much as you will the infinite cobwebs which the ambition and the ignorance of men have spun for centuries over the whole surface of the faith. Fling to the four winds the voluntary humility and all the vain deceits, traditions, and ordinances which, like those of Judaism, are but "weak and beggarly elements." Distinguish between the flickering shadows of disputed minutiae and the Catholic verities of the eternal faith. Distinguish between valueless injunctions of touch not, taste not, handle not, and the eternal distinctions which brand uncleanness, drunkenness, and hate. The kingdom of God standeth not on food and drink, but is righteousness, peace, and joy in believing. You will not find Christ by following the sects and parties who shout with anathemas "Lo, He is here!" or "Lo, He is there!" but if you faithfully serve Him, Christ is with you, and shall be in you. "To me," said a deep religious thinker and divine, "it seems to be one of

the greatest prodigies in the world that men who are rational and intelligent, should take that for religion which for its shallowness, emptiness, and insignificance falls under the just reproof, conviction, and condemnation of reason." That is not religion which is not free and manly. Religion has nothing to do with mawkish sentimentalism. No one can be a true Christian who is not also a true man.

Reason and conscience, illuminated by faith and prayer, these are the torch-bearers of truth. Seek truth, and you will find it, because God is the God of truth. If you desire heaven you must win it; for heaven is a temper not a place. No priest can give it you; no ritual can give it you; no mere ordinances of men can open its doors for you so much as a single inch. You must win it by that obedience to God's laws which nothing but the grace of Christ can enable you to render. The simple eternal tests are not whether you are a Churchman or a Dissenter, nor whether you understand the "Real Presence" in this sense or in that, nor whether you submit your free necks and free consciences to the yoke of others or not; but he that doeth righteousness is righteous, and he that doeth righteousness is born of God. The errors, effeminiacities, and failures of popular religion, all spring up because men trouble themselves about the forms of worship rather than the object of worship; because

men are more concerned for that which is their own in religion, than that which is God's; and because they want to *make* religion, and *define* religion, and *display* religion, rather than to evidence its reality in meek and loving lives. The essence of religious falsity lies in neglecting those necessary and vital doctrines, respecting which Scripture is clear and full, for those mere idolisms of which it says little or nothing; idols of theory and dogma which lessen charity and multiply divisions. Religious partisans show the greatest zeal for what is doubtful, questionable, and valueless; and often pass over the whole message and meaning of Scripture for the sake of some gross misinterpretation of a single text. They tithe, as of old, mint, and anise and cumin, but omit and show no sign of the eternal Amen of judgment, mercy, and faith. But God is the God of the Amen—*i.e.*, of the truth.

Let us then look to the bases of our faith, and to the bases of our conduct; and let the question often ring like the voice of conscience—"the home-God within us"—and if need be roll with the thunders of Sinai, Will ye, by hypocrisy in conduct, will ye, by petty apostasy and unreality in faith, "offer to God the unclean sacrifice of a lie"?

Reality, sincerity, holiness; the elementary Christian graces—faith, hope, love; the primary Christian duties—sobriety, temperance, chastity—these are

the end and these are the test of all true religion. Apart from these all else is but fringes and phylacteries. If, by the aid of God's Holy Spirit, you have these, though all parties excommunicate you, and all priests anathematise, nothing can harm you; and when you pass from the babble of the world's malediction, and the falsehoods of the representatives of nominal and erring religion, clear and high for you shall peal the eternal verdict, "Well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." If you have not these, all the world may praise you; you may be throned with Annas and Caiaphas; your name may be written with fulsome eulogies in every hagiology; but you will hear at the last the awful judgment, "Amen, I say unto you, I never knew you; depart from Me ye workers of iniquity."

II.

“And all the people said Amen, and praised the Lord.”

I CHRON. xvi. 36.

A FEW weeks ago I preached on the word “Amen,” as the name by which God calls Himself in the Old Testament, where he is the “God of Amen”—*i.e.*, of eternal, essential Truth—and as the name by which Christ calls Himself in the New Testament: “These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.” I purpose this morning to speak to you briefly on the liturgical use of the word: its use in our public services and in our private prayers. We use it incessantly; is it not desirable that we should grasp something of its significance?

In itself the word means “truth.” It is often rendered in our Bible “verily,” as in the many sayings of our Lord which begin, “Verily, verily I say unto you.” It means *fiat* (“Be it so!” “May this be fulfilled!”). As we use it, then, in every prayer, it is the *signaculum consensus nostri*, the stamp and seal of our faith; and it is also the *votum*

desiderii nostri, the expression of our ardent desire, the cry of our fervent hope. It is a prayer in itself, a separate prayer, a prayer that all our prayers may be fulfilled. It expresses at once our expectation and our confidence. Both are needed. Too often we pray as those who mean nothing by their prayer, who expect nothing from their prayer, who hardly believe in Him to whom their prayers are addressed. All this reverses the true idea of prayer, and to all this our "Amen" is a rebuke.

There are certain words of which the mere sound acquires an additional sanctity from their many beautiful and solemn associations. "Amen" is one of them. Like "Hallelujah," like "Hosanna," like "Kyrie Eleison," we take such words from their original Hebrew and their original Greek, because we would fain embalm them in the hallowed memories derived from their use by generations of the Communion of Saints. Remember how, after all the blessings of Gerizim and the curses of Ebal, we find the rubric of Moses: "And all the people shall say Amen." When David nominates Solomon to the throne of his kingdom the priestly soldier Benaiah answers, "Amen! the Lord God of my lord the king say so too." When David brought the Ark to Zion with songs and dances, "all the people said Amen, and praised the Lord." And after some of the most jubilant outbursts of the Psalms we find Amen and

Amen. The apostolic benediction is sealed with its Amen. Most of the books of the New Testament end with Amen. In the last book of the Bible, after the Hallelujah-anthem of the angel hosts, the Immortalities around the throne of God and of the Lamb cry Amen; and in its last chapter, and its last words, "He that testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly," and the bride answers, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus." "If we say Amen to God's call, He says Amen to our deliverance." Thus, in heaven and on earth there is the acclamation and the echo to this lovely and faithful cry, by which the human soul acknowledges the God of the Amen, the God of perfect sincerity and truth.

Naturally, therefore, the use of this word has been precious in the Church of God. But not in the Church of God only. There are but three monotheistic religions in the world—the Jewish, the Mahometan, the Christian. They all originated from centres within a few days' journey of each other—from Sinai, from Jerusalem, from Mecca. The word belongs equally to all three.

i. We have seen how thoroughly it belongs to God's ancient people. They used it in the wilderness three thousand five hundred years ago. They used it in the Temple after the ringing of the golden harps and the sound of the silver trumpets. The returning exiles were inspired and gladdened by it

when Ezra, in the Temple court, blessed the great Lord God, and all the people stood up and answered Amen and Amen, lifting up their hands. They use it to this day at every service, with bowed heads and the inextinguishable expectancy of indomitable hope.

ii. And the Mahometans also, as well as the Jews, use it at every service. Mahomet had borrowed all that is best in his teaching from Jewish rabbis, and from a certain Sergius, a monk of the Church of Assyria. A traveller who visited and lived in almost every region of the globe tells us that the one service which affected him most of all which he had heard was in a Mahometan mosque. Alas! that it should have been so, for he had heard many a Christian service. But this was in the Kaaba at Mecca, at the annual pilgrimage. An old man got up to preach, dressed in a snowy turban and a snowy robe which was half hidden under the soft fell of his long snow-white beard. He had not spoken long before his words were interrupted by an occasional "Amen!" And then, as he swayed and touched the hearts of his audience, as the trees of the wood are bowed by the summer wind, there arose from all the assembled multitude "Amen, Amen," and again, "Amen, Amen," repeated with the utmost fervency after almost every sentence, rising and falling like the dashing of rhythmic waves, and breathing into the ear of the Lord God of Sabaoth the concentrated

essence of unnumbered prayers. If fervency, if sincerity be the heart of true worship, we are sure that those prayers were not in vain.

iii. Nor was it otherwise once among Christians. The Amen of the Christian congregation was once a real and solemn thing. The Christian poet Prudentius sings of the Amen, which with its resounding echo strikes the sky:

Et resonaturus ferit æthera vocibus Amen.

And St. Jerome tells us that, "at the end of every public utterance of prayer and praise, the 'Amen' of the people sounded like the loud murmur of the sea, or the voice of thunder, while the hollow idols, and their temples that were empty, did echo and rebound the churches' Amen so that their fabrics shook." And Dean Stanley writes: "The consecration of the Lord's Supper was not complete till it had been ratified in the most solemn way by the congregation. For it was at this point that there came, like the peal of thunder, the one word which has lasted through all changes and all liturgies—the word which was intended to express the entire truthful assent of the people to what was done and said—the word 'Amen.'"

Thus the word was dearer for many a solemn association. Saints have faintly whispered it to the words of prayer uttered by their weeping loved ones

beside their dying beds ; martyrs have sighed it forth ere they sank into heathen or Romish flames. When Cyprian was doomed to death by decapitation with the sword, he deemed it sufficient to express his glad submission to the will of God by breathing forth the one word "Amen."

Would that the word were as real to us now ! It still was so in the Puritan times. Men called the Puritans austere. In the orgies of the Restoration, in the Circean sty of the court of Charles II., on the polluted stage of the eighteenth century, Puritans and their followers of the great Evangelical revival were held up, by actors stained with every vice, to audiences degraded with all uncleanness, as sour and canting hypocrites. Naturally enough ! The hiss of the world is the glory, because it proves the faithfulness, of the holy ones of God. To godless worldlings all zeal is pretence, and all religion is cant ; and the only beautiful things—the subject of their Bacchanalian and amorous songs—are the drink and sensual debasement which degrade man below the brutes. Puritanism was nobly austere in the dignity of a manhood which loved righteousness and hated shams. But was it sour ? Well, I for one would rather enjoy one hour of Milton's rapture, or of the fervent hymns of Covenanters hunted into the wild sea caves, than whole years of the laughter of fools, which could not hide the retribution of the sated and the shame of

the unclean. The Puritans at least knew how to pray. Their religion has not sunk into the formalism which cares for the ever-varying trivialities of rites and forms, and does not care to show one of the most elementary graces which Christ requires. The meaning of "Amen" had not become a dead letter to the Puritan, "When we set our seal to the truth of God, and say Amen," writes one Puritan divine, "it is a word that fills heaven and earth; there is not a joyfuller word in the world." "The united breath of God's people," writes another, "sends a blast upon their enemies. If any single soul pray in faith it shall be heard; how much more when the whole congregation unanimously cries Amen. God will say Amen to such Amens!"

All this is altered now. The glad enthusiasm of early Christianity, the noble fervour of Puritanism, the earnest holiness of the Evangelical revival, alas! are dead. Christian people, how many of you have been saying "Amen"—"Amen" with your lips, "Amen" in your hearts—to all the prayers in which we now have joined? Who hears in these days the "Amen" of the Christians in the catacomb, of the Covenanters in the mountain glen, like the roll of thunder or the roar of the deep sea? It has dwindled into a murmur, it has died into an echo, it has become a mechanical prayer. Alas! alas! Christian congregations are now too lazy to say "Amen." It

is too much trouble. They let the clergy say "Amen" for them; they let the choir sing "Amen" for them, while they dream into wandering thoughts. Ah, I wish that beside our choirs we had in every church the proper choir of some thousand voices. The choir leads in most churches, but how many of the congregation follow? Many a time I have heard prayers to which the response of large congregations has scarcely been a breath, a sigh, a barely audible shiver, as of the last sere aspen leaves in the autumn wind. Many are too much deadened by indolence and by familiarity, too indifferent to their own merely nominal prayers, too much absorbed in thoughts and cares and fancies—not always innocent or harmless ones—to tell God, even by a disyllable, that they meant that prayer to be for them, that they desire the granting of its petition. Indeed, as Savonarola said centuries ago, we have many fine ceremonies in these days—quite dramatic, quite magnificent. But unless the New Testament be meaningless, all the forms in the world are not so dear to Christ as one "Amen" of one congregation uttered from a pure heart fervently. It is not the dress or the form, but the heart which constitutes true religion. Of external paraphernalia Christ knew nothing, and the Apostles knew nothing, and the burning-hearted faithfulness of the early Christian centuries knew nothing; but when Christians are

Christians in something more than show—Christians of meek and loving hearts, pure, and kind, and true—then “Amen” is pre-eminently the word of Christian congregations who want to pray and not to be prayed for, to sing and not to be sung to.

“All Christians,” says Archbishop Leighton, “are God’s clergy.” “All Christians,” says St. Peter, “are a royal priesthood.” “All Christians,” says St. John, the beloved disciple, “are kings and priests.” Alas! like Esau, most Christians are content to sell their birthright and their priesthood for a mess of pottage. They have forgotten—they have been fatally taught to forget—what Christ and the Apostles taught: that there are in the Christian Church no priests except in so far as all are priests; that our *presbyters* are purely representative, and in no sense vicarious; that the veil of partition is rent asunder from the top throughout; and that the very humblest may have free, unimpeded, personal access direct, and with no need for any intermediary but Christ, into the immediate presence, into the inmost audience chamber, into the very Holy of Holies of the Eternal God.

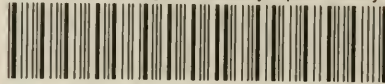
Oh! remember then, in conclusion, that mere formal prayers—prayers said for you but unfelt within you, prayers read to you but not offered by you, worship at which you are present but in which you take no part—are utterly unavailing. You

might just as well patent a machine to do it for you, as the Tartars do. But where prayers have not been the prayers of others mumbled for you in slovenly artificiality, or in an unknown tongue, but *your* prayers, fervent, effectual, humble; when the heartfelt "Amen" puts the petitions which you have offered into the hand of God; when, in holy security of His faithfulness and truth, your "Amen" is the expression of your belief in His love and wisdom, referring it to Him how and when He will answer, then indeed into your "Amen" you will concentrate and put together all your requests, and, as Luther says, "As your Amen is, so has been your prayer."

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